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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE RIVALS FACE TO FACE.]

## LADY RAVENHILL'S SECRET.

### CHAPTER XIV.

LORD RAVENHILL did not see Mrs. Hill before the *Constantia* steamed away to Norway. He called on the Fortescues to make a hasty adieu, and was not a little relieved to find that the pretty face, which had been a magnet to him for so long, was not to be seen among the family circle.

Mrs. Hill was out; she saw the last of him, nevertheless, as she stood alone on the end of the Admiralty Pier and watched the yacht slowly steaming past, tossing the spray from her bows.

She could have almost thrown a stone on the deck, she was so close—close enough to see distinctly every soul on board, including her husband in his blue serge suit, standing on the bridge with his friend Captain Churchill, evidently in the very best of spirits, and anticipating the trip with as much zest as any schoolboy, in spite of what he had declared to her scarcely twelve hours ago. So much for men!

As long as they were with you they tell you all kind of stories, but the instant sport or other interests, or, worse still, another woman came between you, you were forgotten.

He, for instance, did not even once look back on Seabeach, where he had spent so many, many happy hours with her; he did not bestow as much as a parting glance on the busy Parade where they had so often walked together, on the chalky hills, nor the sheltering beach, each of which had a special little memory of their own.

No, his face was set resolutely seawards. He never once looked back; his heart was not in the highlands, nor with her. It was with the salmon in a foaming, swirling, Norwegian river. Better so, at any rate, than with another woman.

She was sorry now, as she watched the fast-receding yacht, that she had not given him a hint at her identity. She had had great opportunities, and coquetted with them all.

When would she see him again?—within a few months, a few years, or never? Perhaps

if he had known who she really was, he would have been quite different. Who knows?

He might have been filled with the deepest aversion instead of admiration. Still her eyes followed the yacht, now becoming a dimmer and dimmer little speck, as she leant her elbows on the cold stone parapet, and with her chin in her hands, gazed and gazed as well as the tears would permit.

"So here you are!" said a loud, jocular voice at her elbow. "Seeing the last of him?—eh! Here, have another look!" tendering a pair of glasses in mother-o'-pearl case.

Mrs. Derwent it was, bold, confident-looking, and beautifully dressed, who now stood at Nellie's side, with an expression of contemptuous amusement on her face.

She had not failed to see two tears hastily wiped away. Nothing of that kind ever escaped her, and she was going to give Mrs. Hill a piece of her mind, and to warn her off from poaching in her preserves in the future.

"No, thank you," said Nellie, waving away the proffered opera glasses. "I don't want them."

"Ah! his face is too well imprinted in your mental vision, I suppose! You admire him, as we all do. But let me give you a hint, a friendly hint: it is unwise to be too much impressed. He has a wife!"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Nellie, impatiently.

"She is blind—blind from her birth—and half idiotic, and I hear in wretched health. They say she can't last more than another month or two, and I am sure her death will be a happy release. What say you?"

Nellie could not exactly regard her own demise as a happy release, so she poked a little bit of gravel carefully out from between two stones, and said nothing.

"You knew he was married, of course?"

A nod signified her companion's assent.

"It was all for money. A regular business transaction, just to keep the coin and the title together. Of course next time he will please himself, and choose somebody more suitable."

"I suppose so," assented the present Lady Ravenhill.

"I daresay you can guess who it will be," smiling. "We were engaged once, before this wretched farce of a marriage, but neither of us had anything to marry on; of course, now it is another affair."

"Do you think—think it right to speculate on another woman's death like this?" suddenly burst out Mrs. Hill, with blazing cheeks. "She is not dead yet, remember. I think it awful taste, to say the least of it, engaging yourself to a man in his wife's lifetime; and anyway, I am the last person to whom you should make these confidences!"

"Why?"—with a sneer—"because you are in love with him yourself? You need not look so furious; and I am sorry to dissipate your daydreams, my dear; but when Lady Ravenhill dies, Lord Ravenhill is under a promise to me! I am waiting for him. I have had many excellent offers, but I intend to be true to my first love!"

"I can't believe Lord Ravenhill ever engaged himself to you in any such way," said Nellie, defiantly.

"Not in so many words, perhaps, but I prefer deeds."

"Tell me then of one deed that will substantiate your statement."

For all reply, Mrs. Derwent raised her exquisitely gloved hand, and pointed a long taper finger in the direction of the now barely visible steam-yacht.

"Well, I see nothing but her smoke," said Nellie, impatiently. "Do you mean that it is all smoke," sarcastically.

"There is no smoke without fire," asserted Mrs. Derwent. "What is she called, for instance?"

"The *Constantia*, of course."

"And am I not called *Constantia* too?"—triumphantly. "Has it never struck you that she was named after me?"—with a malicious smile. "Now are you convinced?"

"No, not yet," replied Nellie, valiantly. "That may only be a coincidence."

"Your incredulity is absolutely astonishing. However, I will show you something that is not smoke, and could not possibly be a coincidence," and putting her hand in her pocket she drew out a blue morocco letter-case beautifully finished, and evidently containing not a few epistles. She laid it down on the stone parapet (they were at the very end of the pier, far away from the usual promenade, and quite alone, save for a fisherman and two or three sailors, who had been watching these two pretty women with undignified curiosity). Very deliberately Mrs. Derwent opened the case, and very deliberately selected a letter.

It was in Hugh's handwriting. "You may look at the first line," said Connie, taking it out of the envelope, and holding it before Lady Ravenhill's eyes. It began, "My own darling Connie." "You may read it all if you like," said Mrs. Derwent, condescendingly.

"No, thank you," shaking her head.

"Here is the end—see!"—turning it over—"yours till death, Hugh Ravenhill."

See! yes, she did see. The paper was swimming before her, but she made a valiant effort, and rallied her senses once more.

"Now are you convinced?"

"No, not yet. This letter may have been written to you years ago, before—before he was married."

"Well, you are a disbelieving little heathen! Here, will the envelope convince you? It is just a week old—see! Seabeach, August 10th."

Yes, here was the date, and the address was in his hand. There was no more to be said. He had actually written this letter to Connie within the last week. "Men were deceivers ever."

"Now you are convinced; I see it in your face, and I may put away my little treasures," commencing to gather up several letters and send them away.

"I want to ask you one thing, Mrs. Derwent," said Nellie, with a great effort, and with quivering pale lips. "What is your object in telling me all this, and displaying your love-letters?"

"My motive and my object is for your good—your good alone, my dear girl," with a mocking smile. "I know Hugh was very attentive to you. I don't mind it in the least. I like him to adore himself. It is a little way he has, which means nothing absolutely nothing!"—speaking out her hands, with the glasses in one and the letter-case in the other. "But it was hard on you, I must confess; and as you might have been nursing hopes which can never be fulfilled, I thought I would give you a hint—a stitch in time saves nine."

"Thank you," replied Nellie, feebly, and mastering her passion by a great effort. "But do you think you were wise to confide so much to me, a stranger—a stranger, who does not claim to be another else? Supposing I were to retail to all Seabeach society what you have just been telling me—that Lord Ravenhill is your lover, that he writes to you in the tenderest manner, and what you are engaged to be married, whenever his wife dies, and the sooner she is out of the way the better! What will people say to you when I repeat this pretty little scandal?"

"I would not dare!" cried Connie, becoming yellow under her pearl powder and rouge.

This little Mrs. Hill had more in her than she imagined.

"Dare!—and why not?"

"You have no witnesses, nothing but your own unsupported testimony; and if you repeat this scandal, as you call it, I shall declare it to be a scandal, and nothing else—a wicked, malicious libel, made up by you, and shall swear that I never told you a word about Lord Ravenhill, that I never had a letter from him in my life, and that the whole story from first to last was a lie! Now, go and tell! Now, go and tell as fast as ever you like! Be quick! Don't lose any time! I see the Fortescues coming down the pier."

Nellie gazed at her unscrupulous companion with an expression of contemptuous disgust. Had her ears deceived her? Such depravity almost took away her breath.

She could not trust herself to speak, and without a word turned away, leaving Mrs. Derwent for a moment mistress of the position, but, on second thoughts, she found her wits and her courage, and, quickly retracing her steps, came up to where the black-eyed widow still leaned against the parapet.

"One last word, Mrs. Derwent," she said, in a low, but perfectly distinct voice, "your wicked secret shall be safe with me; but I may as well tell you that as long as I live you will never marry Lord Ravenhill."

And before the astonished Connie had found the power of speech she was gone, was walking down the pier with her head very erect, having

had the privilege of firing the last shot, and saying the last word!

## CHAPTER XV.

AMONG the excitement of the last month, and the many new events that had made it ever memorable, Mrs. Hill felt a reaction and a flatness in her life that she had never experienced before.

The days dragged on. She cared no longer for riding, or reading, or walking, or even talking. Life was a weariness. She seemed to have nothing left to live for now.

Although she did her best to rouse herself in the family circle, the change in her spirits was not lost on them all, and it was agreed that she and Jenny Fortescue were to accept a most pressing invitation to spend a couple of months with Mrs. Fortescue's sister, Mrs. Monckton, at her place down in Shropshire.

The Moncktons were wealthy, had no children, and were never so happy as when they had their house crammed with company.

Monckton Grange was a very delightful place to stay at. It embodied the picturesque of an old Tudor mansion with all the elegant luxuries of the nineteenth century. It had warm, silken-curtained rooms, soft, delicious easy-chairs, a French cook, a haunted room, long, narrow winding passages, and several cockscrow staircases, putting the chief oaken flight at one side.

It boasted excellent cover shooting, and was the centre of a fashionable and social neighbourhood.

Lord and Lady Westbury lived in a white Italian palace about three miles off, and Lord Ravenhill's family mansion was only eight miles away as the crow flew.

A few days after Nellie's arrival she was summoned by Mrs. Monckton to accompany her on a round of visits.

Very pretty she looked as she took her place in the neat and cosy brougham, with fur rug and foot-warmer. She wore a rich brown velvet costume, trimmed with gables, and a little brown velvet princess bonnet made a very good background for her fair hair.

After trotting about the muddy roads and paying several duty calls, they found themselves with West Towers next on the list, and bowling up the approach to Lord Westbury's door.

Yes, her ladyship was at home, and they were not sorry to unpack themselves, and follow the powdered footman across the softly-carpeted hall, through two large reception-rooms, and finally into a warm, snug, scented boudoir, which was empty.

A splendid fire glowed in the logs, a fat pug lay curled up before it, too fat and too comfortable even to rise and gaze at the strangers—or stranger, for Mrs. Monckton was an old friend.

Tea was standing on a low table near Lady Westbury's pet chair, and this beverage was eyed by both ladies with pleasurable anticipation, for they were fanatical devotees of bohea.

"And have you been counting the hours till we met?" said a gay, bold female voice from an inner room, behind a curtain.

A man's laugh and some unintelligible muttering was the only audible reply.

Here Mrs. Monckton discreetly coughed, and the man said,—

"I say, is there going to be no tea this evening?" pushed away the curtain, and Lord and Lady Ravenhill were once more face to face.

He was in full hunting get-up. His top boots were splashed, he carried his hunting-crop in his hand, and the colour of his scarlet coat was reflected in his wife's face as she beheld Mrs. Derwent's figure, in a well-fitting green habit, following him with a gently-determining hand on his arm.

Here was proof positive, said Nellie to herself, as she accorded the pair a very wintry reception. Wintry or not, it did not freeze her husband. He was evidently charmed to



meet her once more, and when Lady Westbury and Mrs. Monckton, and Mrs. Derwent and a young Guardsman were chatting most sociably over the tea and tea-cake, endeavoured to draw her into friendly converse with himself.

He sat exactly in front of her, on a low velvet chair, with his crop across his knee, a cup of tea in hand, and evidently wished to re- cement their friendship.

"How awfully well you are looking, Mrs. Hill!" he said. "The country air agrees with you down to the ground."

"Am I?" she answered briefly, toying with her teaspoon.

She felt inclined to return the compliment. The scarlet coat was most becoming to his dark hair and eyes, and the excitement of the late run had not yet died out of his countenance—or was it the pleasing result of a meeting with his "own darling Conny?"

This view of the subject was not without a chilling effect upon Lady Ravenhill. Her answers were as cold and as sharp as hailstones. Her pretty face might have been represented as a hard frost.

"What on earth has come to you, Mrs. Hill?" he said at last, irritably, even his patience worn threadbare. "Last time we met we were capital friends—(friends, and, by George! she had offered to kiss me! he remarked to himself)—and now you won't even speak to me! What have I done? Why am I in your black books? Won't you tell me?" looking her straight in the face with his handsome dark eyes.

"There is nothing to tell," she answered, colouring.

"Oh! I was afraid I had had the misfortune to offend you," he answered. "And what have you been doing with yourself since last August?"

"Nothing—nothing—out of the way," she replied.

Then—dropping his voice suddenly, and leaning a little towards her—"I suppose you have not made it up with him yet?"

"Him?" she coloured; "what do you mean?" very sharply.

"Your husband, of course. You know you told me about him that day on St. Catherine's Hill. Have you made friends?"

"No," she answered, becoming very red, and stroking her face in her muff with deep attention.

"And won't you? You said he was good, popular, handsome, clever; you see I have it all pat."

"But I have since discovered that he is not—not what I said, quite as contrary!" she answered, without raising her eyes.

"When? Then the gulf is wider than ever, no chance of a truce—eh?"

"Not the slightest," with a bitter little laugh.

"Poor devil," compassionately; "I'm sorry for him. You might give him a chance?"

"I never give chances," grossly.

"But what has he done?" Seeing her face harden with haughty astonishment, he hastened to add, "I beg your pardon, I am asking very impertinent questions—your face answered. I know what he has done just as well as if you had spoken, and the secret shall never pass my lips."

"You are quite too clever, but I doubt your powers of divination, notwithstanding," she returned, sarcastically.

"Shall I prove my words? Shall I tell you his fault?"

A nod of acquiescence—then leaning towards her—

"He has been making love to another woman! That's just the one thing your sex never pardons. Yes! I was right, but how he could it is beyond me to understand. One would almost say that he had never seen you!"

"Almost, indeed? I believe Mrs. Monckton is going, so I will say good-bye," rising. Mrs. Monckton did not leave without engaging Mrs. Derwent to spend a week with her, also Lord Ravenhill, and Captain Montagu, the Guards-

man, who had been viewing Ravenhill's long *idiot's-bell* with the pretty girl in brown with envious and impatient eyes.

Yes, Mrs. Monckton was having a meet—a big dinner and some theatricals next week, and a houseful of people. Lord Ravenhill, Mrs. Derwent, and Captain Montagu were all delighted to accept.

"What a handsome man that young Ravenhill is—is he not, my dear?" said Mrs. Monckton, as they rolled away down the avenue, leaving him standing bare-headed on the steps. "And what a sad thing it is about his wife! She really ought to die, poor thing, and leave him free," added the old lady, pulling the fur rug nearly up to her chin.

"Why should she die, dear Mrs. Monckton?" said Nellie, looking away out of the window, and leaving not a part of her profile to be seen.

"Because her life is a burthen to herself. She is blind, and her mind is quite gone. The old lord made the marriage; it was a wicked act in my opinion, but legal. Of course there are no children—no heirs—and he is placed in a very strange position—a married man, without a wife."

"Does he live down here much?" said Mrs. Hill, still looking out of the window, with a face the colour of a peony.

"No, scarcely ever, but lately I'm sorry to say he is down very often, for there is an attraction."

"Mrs. Derwent?"

"Pooh! No, he is an attraction for her, but that is all blown over with him! She is older than he, and *possible*, and fast, and not a woman I like, between you and me; but she is a standing dish at our theatricals, and makes things go."

"And this other attraction?" said Nellie, in a hard, mechanical voice.

"Not a young person in his own rank of life at all, my dear"—speaking in a whisper—as if it were possible the coachman could overhear her, when they were bowling along ten miles an hour home wards bound.

"And who is she?" she asked, with trembling lips.

"She is a girl who used to live at Lord Craven's Lodge; we pass the gates directly—look out on your side of the road and you will see her where she comes from—a pretty, tall, fair girl, that has an air quite above her station."

"Do you really mean that he admires her?"

"Admires her is putting it very mildly, my dear! They say that the moment the breath is out of his wife's body he will marry her!"

This was hard on Nellie—very hard, indeed. Here were two women waiting to marry her husband the instant she would be so obliging as to die!

"How do you know?" she inquired with characteristic persistence. "Maybe it is only country gossip—things are magnified and exaggerated."

"No exaggeration in this case, I am afraid," said Mrs. Monckton, shaking her head, with great solemnity. "This girl used to live at the Lodge at Craven Park, and was a pretty, modest, respectable girl, and in my own class in Sunday-school; and really quite a superior sort of young woman. Now, I would not even look at her. She has," lowering her voice to a whisper—"a child!" Just fancy! She is not one bit ashamed of herself; and as to her old uncle with whom she lives, he has long been half an imbecile, and has no control over her—the mink! She tells all inquirers to mind their own business. They were turned out of Craven Gate Lodge, of course. We could not have such a scandal under our very noses, and he has taken a cottage for her about three miles off, near a very quiet, out of the way village. I hear she has a splendid seal-skin coat, and actually has the effrontery to go to church in it! Did you ever know such depravity?"

"There's where she used to live!" she added, excitedly, as they flashed past the

great iron gates of Craven Park. "The place is shut up. It's a great loss to us—the big place I mean, of course. Lord Craven and his sons don't get on at all. They say they are an awfully wild lot, and he is a horrid old skin-flint, and as proud as Lucifer. The eldest one is in the army. I don't know how he lives, I'm sure. His father does not allow him a sou besides his pay. He is abroad somewhere or other."

"Are you quite certain that—that it is Lord Ravenhill—about—you know who?—this girl," stammered Nellie, at last, when she could get in a word.

"Quite certain, my dear. He has been seen walking with her, talking with her, and all that sort of thing. Of course it is only spoken of with bated breath, you know, but the world seems turned upside down when a man like him can see anything in a gamekeeper's daughter, and not young, not at all young. Very handsome, I grant you, but eight or nine—and twenty or more!"

The world did, indeed, seem to be turned upside down with Nellie. Mrs. Derwent was bad enough, in all conscience, but this was ten times worse. "Give him a chance!" indeed. Never. She had done with him now, once for all.

She alighted from the stuffy brougham with a frightful headache—whether due to the atmosphere or the news it was there; and exclaiming herself on this pretext spent all the evening in her room digesting Mrs. Monckton's piece of scandal.

If she could have taken anyone into her confidence she would have felt better, but such a proceeding was out of the question. She dare not divulge who she was—she must suffer alone.

It seemed to her that she was paying a heavy price for the restoration of her sight. Blind she saw nothing, heard nothing, knew nothing. Now she had recovered the use of her eyes she saw only too much. She had seen and fallen in love—no use to blink the fact—with her own husband, and he was a heartless, treacherous, unprincipled wretch—and still she loved him.

## CHAPTER XVI.

MONCKTON GRANGE was crammed from roof to cellar! Lord Ravenhill and Mrs. Derwent, and Captain Monckton helped to fill it, and were among the liveliest and most popular guests.

The theatricals were over, and had been a signal success, Lord Ravenhill and Mrs. Derwent sharing the laurels between them. Lovers they had been on the stage—lovers they were off the stage, as far as appearances were any guide; and as for Nellie, she was flirting in the most open and barefaced manner with Captain Roland Montagu, who was her slave and her shadow.

Lord Ravenhill had evinced a great desire to be both on his first arrival, but he had been so unmercifully and so ruthlessly snubbed that he never ventured more than good-morning and good-night, and was quite on his high horse, and not inclined to dismount. This was Connie's opportunity, and she did not let it slip, you may be sure. Hugh was called upon to act with her, to ride with her, to fetch and carry, to hold her silks whilst she wound off skein after skein, under Nellie's very nose—it was all the same to Hugh—who appropriated him, when the only one of the ladies he cared a button for ignored him, and treated him as he said to himself, "worse than a dog, by Jove—worse than a dog! I wish she would treat me half as well. She's always feeding and nursing, and kissing that horrid little pug—lucky old brute!"

Mrs. Derwent was a person of odd fancies and sudden caprices. She was fired with a desire to see Lord Ravenhill's family mansion, and on a bye-day a large party was got up to visit Ravenswood, under the auspices of its master. Most of the guests were to ride to

explore the park, and, previous, to lunch sumptuously, and to return in time for dinner.

Nellie declined to make one of the expedition—declined in vain. Her excuses were laughed at as barefaced and silly; and, in spite of herself, she had to give in, so as not to make herself remarkable, and visit the house where she was born as if she were an inquisitive stranger. Rude as she was, it was chiefly beside her that Lord Ravenhill rode, and pointed out the different effects of scenery—she it was that he helped first from her horse, that he ushered first into the old familiar rooms, and to her he showed the grim old painting of "my wife's father."

He insisted on her occupying the head of the table, and she took it mechanically for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, much to the indignation and disgust of Connie, who had to content herself with a seat at the hosts' right hand. The party was merry, the luncheon superb, the champagne of the best; flowers from Covent Garden decked the table, which was loaded with old family plate. The whole house had been brightened up and metamorphosed since Nellie's time.

"Jolly old place! Awful jolly house," said Captain Montagu, whose heart was merry with wine. "The only thing we want to make the entertainment complete is the presence of Lady Ravenhill."

An awkward silence ensued, and then a sudden buzz of conversation came from all sides to cover, if possible, the last unfortunate speech.

Lord Ravenhill glanced over at his *vis-à-vis*. She was white to the very lips. What ailed her? Was she going to faint? No, she was not. She was able to leave the table quite steadily and sedately, and follow the crowd round the gardens, stables, grounds, and finally to the old church.

"It only wants one thing, Hugh," said Connie, with a sigh of satisfaction—the place having far surpassed all her calculations and anticipations—"and that is a mistress," she added, in a soft voice.

"I'm afraid it is never likely to have that, so you must make the best of it as it is," said Hugh, brusquely, pushing open the heavy church door and removing his hat.

The sightseers spread all over the building, gazing at tombs, brasses and slabs; and Nellie, without knowing it, found herself standing at the foot of the communion rails.

"Here I was married," said a well-known voice beside her; "nearly four years ago." What would he have said if she had replied, "and to me!" but she merely mumbled something about the pretty new window of stained-glass and the vivid colour of the sky.

"New window! How do you know it is new?" he asked sharply.

"Oh, I don't know!" she stammered, in confusion. "It looks quite recent, that is all."

"So it is. It was put up to the memory of the late Earl."

"By you?"

"Yes of course. It was the least I could do, don't you think, when he provided me with a wife and a fortune." There was a ring of bitterness in this speech that did not escape Mrs. Hill, and she turned away and permitted Captain Montagu to show her all the old monuments of the Ravenhill family, and what is more, and worse, she encouraged him in a marked manner, and kept him by her side, not merely all the way home, but all the evening; and the more she remarked Hugh's looks of indignant expostulation and pained surprise the more she laughed and smiled and flirted. The thought of Rose Waller at the Gate Lodge made her almost reckless, and she felt a downright wicked pleasure in astonishing and shocking her unprincipled husband. If he only knew she was his wife, how furious he would be! Not that she did anything actually wrong out of the common—oh, dear, no! She merely banked with Captain Montagu at cards and made saucy little rude remarks across the table to Lord Ravenhill. She had every confidence with her partner behind her

large black fan. She allowed him to sit beside her at tea, to stand beside her at the piano, to carry her cloak, to help her to mount her horse. Lord Ravenhill beholding all this was amazed, angry, and jealous.

The day of the hunt was propitious. There were hundreds on the lawn—on foot and on horseback, ladies and gentlemen—and if you were to single out the best-looking pair of equestrians and give your vote impartially I am sure you would have said Lord Ravenhill for one, on his splendid black hunter, and the pretty girl in the brown habit for the other, viz., Mrs. Hill.

The meet was late—the hounds drew several covers blank, and had a rattling run later in the afternoon. Nellie had ridden splendidly—desperately; indeed, she did not much care whether she broke her neck or not. Every time she thought of Rosie Waller, and that was pretty often, she dug her little sharp spur and went faster and faster. Well for her that she was on a well-trained thoroughbred. Well for her she was a light weight, or she would have come to grief over some of those blind fences or hog-backed stiles.

The evening was drawing in ere the fox was run to ground, and as Nellie looked round she found herself in a totally strange country, miles from the Moncktons, on a tired horse, and with a cold drizzle coming on. However, she had a tongue in her head, like most of her sex, and asking her way, pushed on at a pretty smart pace—up one lane, down another, the night getting pitch dark, the rain getting heavier, and the horse gradually becoming lamer and lamer every instant.

She was bewildered, tired, wet, and cold, when the long, dark, seemingly endless road was illumined by a light—a twinkling light in a window about fifty yards ahead. It was close to her now; and with great alacrity she sprang off her lame horse, and hammered on the door with the handle of her whip. Her knocking was promptly responded to by a old man in corduroy knee-breeches and grey woollen stockings, with a guttering candle in his hand, and a blank, ill-tempered expression of face.

"What's up now?" he demanded, peevishly; but seeing a lady, and hearing her pitiful tale, he changed his tactics, and motioned her to go in beyond and talk to Rosie. He would see to her horse, and take the stone out of his hoof, and send a boy with her to show her the way.

There were two rooms off the passage, and seeing a light through the half-open door of one, and hearing a stream of gay, light-hearted conversation from that direction, she walked boldly in, and found herself in a bright, warm, cheerful kitchen, with a huge log fire roaring up the chimney. Beside the fire, in a low wooden chair, sat Rosie Waller, looking radiant, in front of it; in his red coat, his wet boots stretched out towards the blaze, sat her husband, completely at his ease, and on the floor beside him Rosie's child—a boy of nearly two. The infant was playing with his hunting crop.

What a picture!—and they had been talking in a confidently low tone. What a start Lord Ravenhill gave—a guilty start—when he was aware of the dripping figure in the doorway; but he soon recovered his presence of mind, and jumping up, exclaimed: "Mrs. Hill! What on earth has happened? Have you had an accident?"

"Oh! no; only lost my way, and my horse fell lame."

"Won't you come to the fire, ma'am," said Rosie, hospitably bringing up another chair, "and let me dry your habit? You are drenched through!"

"No—no thank you! I must be going at once!" replied Nellie, nervously.

To share the hearth with this young woman and her husband was simply out of the question. Were it raining real cats and dogs she would rather face the elements than such a situation, and without another word she was turning to go.

"But this will never do!" said Hugh, im-

patiently. "Let me go and see about your horse. At any rate, I'll go home with you. Sit down for half-a-second," almost thrusting her into his chair, where she sat as if stupefied, whilst Rosie, bustling about to get her a cup of tea from a small black tea-pot that was brewing in the ashes.

"Drink this woman's tea!" she said to herself, as the water streamed off her under the influence of the fire. She would sooner take poison.

"He has lost a foreshoe. It is well for you you met me," said a cheerful voice, "for he never could carry you home!"

"Then I'll walk!" emphatically rising as she spoke.

"No, you will ride my horse," he replied, imperiously, "and I'll walk! But you must get dry first, and Rosie, here, will get you a cup of tea, or something. Rosie, this is one of the ladies from the Grange."

This was beyond bearing, she said to herself, in reply to Rosie's smile and half-kind of courtesy.

"No tea for me!" she exclaimed, pushing the child rudely away with a shove that sent it staggering across the hearth.

"Hullo!" cried Lord Ravenhill, catching it. "It's well I fielded you, Tommy, or you would have had a nasty fall. You don't like children, I see, Mrs. Hill," he said, disapprovingly, soothing the now whimpering Tom, and drying his eyes with his own handkerchief.

"No, I hate them!" she returned, passionately.

"Oh! come now, I say, I don't believe that! No one could hate you, could they, Master Tom?" sitting him on his knee. "He is a fine little chap for two, is he not?"

To this question she deigned no answer.

"No, thank you," to Rosie, who was approaching, cup in hand, "not for me!" waving it away.

"At least, allow me to dry your habit, madame," pleaded Rosie, who could make nothing of this pretty, fair, disdainful young lady, who seemed to shrink from her very touch, and who had repulsed poor Tommy so rudely.

Nellie glanced round the kitchen, and took in the scene before her. Once more the fire, the bright flames, the wooden settle, the round, black table, the old clock, her husband with Tommy on his knee, and Rosie looking as fair as Hebe herself, standing with a rather discouraged expression on her handsome face, still tea-cup in hand.

One moment more, and she had dashed out into the darkness, and seeing the old man leading up the black horse saddled for her, without a word she sprang nimbly on its back, seized the reins, and galloped away like one possessed into the wet and darkness.

"Keep to the left, ma'am. Keep to the left at the turn!" he shouted, hoarsely, after her. "She's mad—mad as a hatter!" muttered the old man, as he gazed after her, open-mouthed. "One would think from the look of her that she had seen the Devil!" So saying he slowly re-entered the lodge, nearly coming into violent collision with Lord Ravenhill as he did so.

"Well, where is she—the young lady? Have you changed the saddles, as I told you?" he asked, quickly.

"Yes, my lord; and the young lady was up on your horse before he was well at the door, and away down the road at a gallop as if the Devil himself was after her! I'm thinking you've been saying something to vex her—be like—"

"Saying something to vex her? Certainly not!"

"Then maybe she saw something she did not like! Maybe she saw a devil! They are in the wood," lowering his voice.

"Nonsense! What was there to see except Rosie and Tommy and me sitting at the fire?"

"Well, then, I can think of nothing else to account for her capers in any way except she's mad or seen a devil! And, indeed, she has a



method in her madness, too, for she has left you to get home on her lame and staggering horse!"

And a few minutes later Lord Ravenhill set forth on foot, leading the lame steed through the soaking, slushy road, and wondering over and over at almost every step he took what extraordinary idea Mrs. Hill could have got into her head now. But think as hard as he could, with the whole of his mind set upon the subject, he never guessed the truth.

(To be continued.)

DRUNKARDS in Germany will for the future be sternly looked after by the State. Each town must keep a record of all the hard drinkers, and the city medical men are bound to report those who habitually imbibe to excess, so that the authorities may weed out the black sheep, and subject them to a strict course of treatment.

THE new street, with a railway beneath it, from Great Tower-hill to Eastcheap, was to be opened for traffic on the 1st of January. This straightened approach is by no means novel in its conception. In a plan of 1766, set out by J. Gwynn, who, indeed, seems to have had quite a prophetic eye for the improvements of an after age, the thoroughfare is clearly foreshadowed. We see it as a wide street, reaching from the eastern end of Cannon-street to the north-western angle of Tower-hill, by Trinity-square, absorbing both Little and Great Eastcheap, together with Great and Little Tower-streets.

ROSE WOOD.—It has always been a mystery to some people why the dark wood so highly prized for furniture should be called "rose wood." Its colour certainly does not look much like a rose, so we must look for some other reason. An exchange explains that when the tree is cut the fresh wood possesses a very strong, rose-like fragrance, hence the name. There are a half-dozen or more kinds of rose-wood trees. The varieties are found in South America and in the East Indies and neighbouring islands. Sometimes the trees grow so large that planks four feet broad and ten feet in length can be cut from them. These broad planks are principally used to make the tops of pianofortes. When growing in the forests the tree is remarkable for its beauty, but such is its value in manufacturing as an ornamental wood that some of the forests where it once grew abundantly now have not a single specimen.

PERSONAL ATTIRE.—Forty years ago, black was the prevailing colour in dress—black for promenade, parlour, church, ball, or business. The motto ran thus: "A black suit is always genteel." The hat was well-crowned, long-napped, broad-brimmed and pressed vicelike on the head. People then did not so much give away their second-hand clothes or dispose of them to the "old clo'" man. They wore them out. For this reason the "swallow-tail" dress-coat was often an article of everyday attire. It was the second hand swallow-tail, supplanted by the new one for Sunday or state occasions. The shirt-collar was high, standing and sharp-pointed at the ends. The black frock-coat was short-waisted, narrow-chested, with long, narrow skirts, and the sleeves were as tight as possible. The ladies' bonnet was modelled after the coal-scuttle. An artificial full-blown peony or bunch of roses adorned its summit. A plain cloak or shawl hung like a rag from the shoulders. A plain untrimmed skirt reached to the ankle. Their slippers were heelless, flat and secured by black strings wound round the ankle. The parasol was edged with deep, heavy silken fringe. A bag of gaily-coloured silk, embroidered with beads, was necessary for full-dress. The handkerchief was bordered with lace and carried exotically in the middle by the thumb and forefinger.

## SOMETHING FOR BABY TO WEAR.

Just in the light of the window there,  
Hour after hour she has kept her place;  
And I know by the look upon her face  
She is making something for baby to wear.

And on the floor her joy and her pride,  
Ready old Tabby to pet or annoy,  
Riots her first little baby-boy:  
As gay as a bird, and as satisfied.

And every stitch is a dream or prayer,  
And every seam is a prayer complete:  
For wishes and hopes and orisons meet  
In a soft little something for baby to wear.

"He will go next week with us to the fair,"  
She finishes all with this brief remark:  
For the light of the window is growing dark.  
"And this will be pretty for him to wear."

A woman works in the twilight gray;  
And the scalding tears they blind her eyes,  
As she bends to measure the length and size  
Of the little garment she makes to-day.

And with snow-white flowers around him shed,  
The baby-boy from the fair returned,  
Has forgotten all he saw or learned,  
And is fast asleep in his little bed.

But night comes down, and her task is done;  
The baby-boy has another dress:  
But not a hope nor a wish, much less  
A prayer—the child is in need of none.

For still asleep where the light is dim,  
In beautiful death lies the white-faced child;  
And the wet-eyed woman has almost smiled,  
As she says: "His robe is ready for him."

J. W. P.

## GOLDEN GRAIN.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### RETROSPECTIVE.

THE rest of that memorable examination day passed for me in a sort of whirling dream. I had won the highest honour that the school could bestow, and was the possessor of the coveted gold medal, which was only given at rare intervals to the composer of a piece of music exceptionally good.

I was congratulated and petted by my schoolfellows, who rejoiced with me without the slightest trace of envy; even Olga Rosenbaum, who had built her hopes on the fantasia that was so highly flavoured with Mendelssohn, was lavish in her congratulations.

I was glad to get away from it all, for there was a trace of sadness in it to me. I was going to leave Wassenhauser very soon, and go I knew not whither.

I should see most of my schoolfellows no more after they had broken up and gone to their respective homes.

I found my way, in a brief interval of leisure, to a favourite nook of mine in the garden, and sat down to think—to dream, girl-like, of the face that had made such an impression on me.

I had never seen eyes like that before—eyes that seemed to look me through and through, and yet with such a gentle and earnest expression.

The eyes of the dark man who had been with the young fellow who helped me out of the river were piercing enough in their regard, and had nearly made me break down in my part of the day's proceedings, but they left nothing but a disagreeable impression on my mind, and I earnestly hoped that I should never see them again.

How good it was of Madame to give me this pretty dress and those ribbons that were exactly the colour to set off what beauty I

had, and how ungracious I had felt in my heart about accepting them from her; yes, I was very glad to think I had looked like the rest of the girls. I should have been sorry to have been shabby, with him looking on.

Bah! what an idiot I was to be sure! What could have come over me that I should think in this insane fashion of a person I should, in all probability, never see again in my life?

"This is the young lady, is it not?"

The voice roused me from my reverie, and I started up to see Madame and the whole aristocratic party approaching. They were walking through the gardens, and had come upon me unawares, I had been so deeply absorbed in my own thoughts.

I blushed furiously, for the object of my thoughts was close to me, and it seemed as if he could see what was passing in my mind, and I would have made my escape, but the duke held out his hand.

"I am glad to have the opportunity of congratulating you," he said, in his grand manner. "This is the young lady you were inquiring about, my lord."

Madame had disappeared, and I could not escape now the party were all round me, and my acquaintance of last year was holding out his hand also.

"You haven't forgotten me, have you?" he asked.

"No," I replied. "But I have never known your name, though you gave me your card. I must have lost it in the hurry of running home."

"You know each other?" the gentleman whom the duke had addressed as "my lord" said with a surprised look.

"Yes, sir!" was the ready answer. "This is the young lady of the river—Miss Ormsby!"

"We must introduce ourselves," the gentleman said in the pleasantest voice I think I have ever heard. "If you lost Harry's card you will be all in the dark as to who we are. This scapegrace here, who was fortunate enough to do you that little service, is my son, Harry Meredyth. I am Lord St. Columb, Lady St. Columb, my daughter Hilda, Mr. Fairchild my son's tutor, and Mr. Meredyth my cousin. I was forgetting you, Hugh, my boy. And now you young folks move on; I am going to talk to mademoiselle here."

There was something so cheery and homelike in his manner that I was not at all afraid of him, peer of the realm though he was, and he looked so fatherly and kind as he stood there by my side, while the others moved slowly away, that I forgot all about his rank, and was as ready to talk to him as if he had been some near relation.

I looked after the rest of the party with interest. "Hugh Meredyth!" So that was the name of the owner of the eyes that were making my brains play me such pranks. Hugh Meredyth! What a pretty name it sounded in my ears, and yet not at all effeminate or unfit to be the name of a brave and good man—and he was good. I had settled that point in my own mind with my first glance at him; but it was not he, it was his cousin, Lord St. Columb, who was standing by my side, and I must bring my thoughts back to him and what he wanted to say to me.

It was not much, but it was courteous and very much to the point.

"I have been speaking to Madame Loventhal about you," he said, in the same pleasant, kindly voice. "Your musical performance really startled us all by its merit. We are very fond of music, all of us, and hardly expected such a treat in a lady's school. I naturally inquired of your preceptress who and what you were, and she tells me you are soon to leave her, and will have your own way to make in the world. Is it so?"

"Yes," I answered, the tears springing to my eyes. I was unnerved and tired, and my heart was full. "I have no friends beyond the walls of the monastery school."

"You will soon make them, doubtless," he said, kindly. "I shall be glad and so will my wife to do anything we can to help you forward in your new life, if you come to England, as I suppose you will. You are English, of course?"

"Oh, yes. And I shall go there, I expect."

"Then, will you remember how much you have pleased us to-day, and understand that we will do what we can to start you on your journey through life. It is a hard battle for a woman to fight unaided sometimes."

He put a card into my hand, and with a hearty clasp that seemed to endorse all he had been saying, he left me and went to his party.

I saw them once more, when they were driving away. My study and Dorothy's was just over the front entrance, and we were at the window; they all smiled and waved their hands to me as they drove off, he duke lifting his hat with the same courtesy as the rest. I ought to have felt very elated; six months ago such an honour would have been enough to turn my head for weeks, but now there was nothing but sadness. They were gone, and Hugh Meredith had gone with them.

Surely I must be mad or going to be ill that I could recall nothing with any distinctness but this one face! Hugh Meredith had hardly addressed half-a-dozen words to me, and had doubtless forgotten my very existence by this time. What had I, Magdalen Ormsby, a friendless girl, with no prospect in the world except working for my daily bread, in common with these fine people. It was very kind of them to say that they would help me, and it might lead to my seeing their cousin again. But what a difference there would be in our circumstances! Here I had my position. I was to-day the most popular girl in the school. I held the highest rank in our little community. When Hugh Meredith and I came face to face again, I should, in all probability, be governess somewhere; and I had an idea in what respect men held governesses.

I must think of such nonsense no more—pleasant dreams and gentle friendships were not for me. I must go forth into the battle and fight in the thickest of the fray if I meant to live and prosper in the world, and I did mean it.

From my babyhood I had been taught self-reliance by the utter absence of everything that makes life attractive and enjoyable to young children. I never knew what it was to have a mother; I had never taken my joys and sorrows—and what keen sorrows childhood feels now and then—to a mother's knee.

It had never been my lot to be nestled up to a motherly bosom, or to listen to the gentle words and loving voices that were the portion of other children. I had no relative in the world that I knew of but an aunt, and she was as unlike my notion of a mother as could well be imagined.

The old woman who was my first nurse to the best of my belief, and who brought me up as well as she could, was far more tender to me than the stern, dark, vindictive-looking woman whom she took me to see occasionally, and who paid her the money for my keep.

My earliest recollections are of a large town in Scotland—Inverness I always think it was—and living with other children in this woman's house. She kept us clean, and she fed us well according to her notions of feeding, though I have come to doubt since whether oatmeal porridge for every meal is conducive to the well-being of little children.

Now and then I was taken somewhere—to an hotel I fancy, for my remembrance is of large and lofty rooms—to see a lady, who used to kiss me and look at me with a curious sort of longing look, but whose manner was repellent, and who always seemed cross for all that.

I was five years old when I was taken, away from the nurse, and taken to live with my aunt, who lived in a very humble way in a

village in the north of Scotland. She must have earned her living at that time by some sort of fancy work for the shops, for she used to send away large parcels and receive others, the gay colours of which delighted me beyond measure.

It was a dreary life for a child. She never fondled me or petted me, and she did not care for me to associate with the children of the village, or to go to school amongst them. She taught me herself, and very thoroughly she did it, visiting mistakes or carelessness upon me with an unsparring hand, and making my life a burden to me by reason of dry studies which I only half understood.

I had reason to thank her afterwards when I got to Wassenhausen, which I did when I was eight years old. My aunt suddenly procured a place of trust in an establishment in Jersey—a lunatic asylum really, though it was called a home for delicate persons—and I could not go with her there. She cast about for a cheap place to send me to, and after some little correspondence with Madame Loventhal, I was despatched to the monastery school.

The journey was a horrible nightmare. As far as Cologne I went in charge of some fine lady's attendant who was going to join her mistress, and who undertook to see me safely on board the Rhine steamer for a consideration.

The woman was not unkind to me; she had made the journey often enough, and I was perfectly safe with her. She fed me well enough, and put me to bed in the great, dreary hotel where we broke our journey; but she had no thought nor sympathy for the terror of a child like me at such an experience.

It seemed to me as if we were never going to stop—as if we were condemned to travel for ever for our sins, and I dared not ask her any questions. My first attempt in that direction was so decidedly snubbed down that I was afraid to repeat it.

I was more dead than alive when we reached Cologne, and the big bedroom where I was left alone, and the echoing passages round it, did not tend to restore my peace of mind. I was a deplorable little object when I was handed over to the captain of the boat the next morning. I was half dead with fright and fatigue. And the round face of the steward, who carried me downstairs, for the day was cold and raw, and told me to lie still on the sofa in the saloon, seemed like an angel's after the unsympathetic treatment I had experienced all the way from England.

He could speak English, and we grew quite friendly as the day went on. He brought me nice things to eat, and when the sun came out found me a corner on the deck where I could see what was going on. So that by the time I arrived at St. Goarhausen, where the boat stopped, I was quite sorry to part with him. A nice-looking lady came on board to fetch me, and looked at me in amazement.

"That little creature!" she exclaimed; "and they have sent her all this way by herself!"

"Yes, Madame," the steward said, he seemed to know the lady; "we have brought her safe, and she looks a little better than she did this morning. She was almost tired to death."

"Poor little soul!" said the lady, and clasped me in her arms as I had never been clasped before in all my life; and I burst into tears and cried on her comfortable bosom as only forlorn and friendless childhood can cry. And this was my first introduction to my kind governess and to the Monastery school.

I was very happy in my new home. It was something terrible at first to be thrown amongst so many girls, and to feel myself such a small, weak creature, for I was the youngest by at least three years of Madame Loventhal's

pupils. But after my first fright had worn off the place seemed a very haven of rest to me—liberty such as I had never dreamed of in my life before was allowed me here. With the woman who had been my first nurse I had only the faintest of back yards to play in, and that privilege was only allowed under certain restrictions. With my aunt it was worse; she seemed to think that children required no play at all, and all my time was spent in learning the driest of lessons, which I could not understand in the least, or taking prim walks by her side in the dreariest places she could find.

She was a curious woman, and I used to wonder sometimes, with a childish curiosity, whether all aunts were like her. I saw other children now and then who were familiar with their friends and who could climb on the knees of their relations and wheedle them out of what they wanted with kisses and prattling caresses. And I used to wonder, in a vague sort of way, what my aunt would say or do if I flung myself upon her as I had seen other children do upon their mothers, and begged for anything.

She would certainly think I had gone mad and treat me accordingly. I never could fancy any one loving her; and yet I had a curious feeling that underneath all her coldness she loved me.

Once or twice I remember her kissing me passionately, once in particular; it was my birthday, and she had given me something—a book of texts, I think; anyway it was not anything very attractive to a lively little child, and when she put it into my hand some sudden impulse made her draw me to her and kiss me as if—instead of being her niece, whom she rather despised and looked upon as an encumbrance—I was something she loved and cherished above all earthly things.

I was startled, and did not return the caress very ardently, but children are not to be won in a moment, and she put me from her with a gesture of disgust.

"Her father's child!" she muttered. "All his—all his!"

I had never heard her speak of my father before, and I was curious, with the wondering curiosity of a child.

"Tell me about my father, auntie," I said. "What was he?"

I understood that he was dead, that I had no parents, I had been pitied enough for being an orphan, and I had a very good idea what the word meant.

"He was the wickedest man on the face of the earth!" she said, so sharply that I was dumfounded for a minute, and wondered speechlessly (what my dead-and-gone father could possibly have done to merit such a sweeping condemnation).

"Did you know him?" I asked, presently, forgetting that he was most likely my aunt's brother.

"Yes; don't ask such foolish questions, and don't speak of him."

But I was on the subject and not to be stopped. I wanted to know; and she was as dense as ever was the circumlocution office.

"Did you know my mamma, aunt?" I asked, presently, thinking her face looked a little less resolutely set.

"Yes!" with a snap that might have warned me off the subject.

"Tell me about her. I want to know what she was like."

"She was the greatest fool that ever was created!" was the fierce reply. "And now have done asking, or I'll send you to bed for the rest of the afternoon without any supper."

That alternative was not to be thought of. I was none too well-fed; not from any real stinginess on my aunt's part, but a principle. She had a notion that children should be dieted and kept on a strict allowance, and I very often went very hungry indeed, and dared not say so. But her sternness did not break me.

When the time came for my aunt to part with me, she let me go without any outward sign of agitation, but I am sure I heard her sob as she turned away after she had given

#### CHAPTER V.

##### A MESSAGE.



me to the woman who was to take me to Cologne; and years afterwards Madame Loven-hal showed me a letter from her, in which she spoke of me as "dearer to her than her life." Altogether she was a strange contradiction was Mrs. Susan Ormsby, as she always called herself, and liked others to call her.

When I grew old enough to think at all about it, I came to the conclusion that my father must have been her brother, and that he had been a reckless spendthrift, or something of that sort, and I set down my aunt as an old maid, who had been soured by misfortunes till she became what she was.

Madame knew no more than I did. She had been applied to to take me, and she had asked for the usual references. They had been forthcoming at once, and had been found perfectly unexceptionable, so I was received at once, and no more questions were asked about me.

I came to know, when I was old enough, that on my capacity and industry at school would depend the whole of my future, and that I should have to get my own living as soon as my education was completed.

I saw my aunt three or four times during my sojourn at the monastery school. Twice she made the journey to see me and satisfy herself that I was really comfortable, and getting on well with my studies; and once I was sent for to Jersey to see her—she was very ill, and in danger, and insisted on seeing me once more.

She was very odd in her manner on that occasion, and seemed half inclined to say something confidential to me, but desisted when she had spoken a few words.

"Time enough!" I heard her mutter as she turned away her head from me. "She is too young for the trust!"

I wondered a little what she meant, but I was only a girl, and the remembrance of her words soon died away till they were recalled by what happened to me afterwards.

I worked my best at school, and even my austere relative was, I think, satisfied with me. I was very neatly clothed. My aunt's notions of what a child required at school and Madame's differed considerably; but there was a certain allowance made, and no more, and I suppose it really was that Mrs. Ormsby could not afford more.

It was only when Madame represented to her that I was growing up, and I had scandalized her by going out with her on one of her visits in a frock that I had ridiculously outgrown, that she recognized the necessity of providing for me more womanly garments still. I sometimes cut a sorry figure by the side of my more stylish schoolfellows.

It was all coming to an end now. I was waiting for orders from Jersey as to my next movements. Madame had hinted more than once that she would like me to stay with her as a teacher; but somehow, kind as she had been, and dearly as I had learned to love her, I felt as if I should like a change. I wanted to try whether I could keep my footing on the difficult path where so many fell. I could come back here if I failed elsewhere, I thought. I had no idea then how hard that same "coming back" is sometimes.

I was very sorry to leave the monastery, and as one by one the girls went away—not one of them without some little evidence of their love for me—my heart sank very low indeed; lowest of all when Dorothy Sondes was fetched by her parents with a carriage and pouncing horses, and all the addenda that riches can ensure. We clung to each other as if we had been sisters.

"I wish you were coming with me, darling," she said. "But you will come, will you not? You will come and pay me a long visit and see my pretty home, and marry a handsome cavalier. Mamma always had plenty on hand."

She laughed as he spoke, and I thought, as I looked at her wonderful beauty, that it was no wonder that Madame Sondes had any number of cavaliers on hand, as she called it.

Men were sure to be plentiful where Dorothy was.

"I should like it, dear," I said, "but the Fates will take me just the other way, I expect. I have not heard from my aunt yet. And I suppose I shall have to go to her till a situation is found for me."

"Find one for yourself, beauty," Dorothy said. "Don't let them send you to read to some deaf old dowager who will wear you out in a week, or to a nursery full of screaming children, to be really a nurse and a maid-of-all-work, and be called a governess on a housemaid's wages. Strike out a path for yourself, and remember you are fit for something better than a place any girl who can read and write can take."

She was right. I was fit for better things than what she described, and yet, in all probability, she had realised exactly what was likely to befall me. I resolved to do better if I could, and we parted with many promises of constant correspondence, and the hope of meeting some day not very far distant.

I sat down in our little room, when Dorothy was gone, and cried as I had not cried since that desolate day when I was sent off in the woman's charge on my long and wearisome journey. With my room-mate the last bit of brightness seemed to have departed, and I felt alone and friendless. There were plenty of girls left, some who were going to stay the vacation, as I had always done. How I wished now that I was one of them once more! Wassenhauser was home, and the world I was going into was strange and cold; if Madame would only renew her offer to me again now I would accept it, in spite of my aunt, and remain there if it were for ever.

"Mademoiselle Ormsby, Madame wants you in her parlour!"

The voice of the French teacher broke in on my dismal reverie, and I started up.

"Yes, mademoiselle," I answered. "I will come directly."

She loved to be called mademoiselle, this elderly faded creature, worn with teaching successive generations of scholars. She loved to think herself young still, and to talk to us elder girls under the seal of secrecy of her one love affair, the hero of which she declared was killed in some battle or other, but we had a great difficulty in finding out what battle. There were discrepancies in mademoiselle's narrative that were puzzling and amusing. She must have been fifty at least, poor thing, and she loved to ape the airs and graces of five-and-twenty, and to delude herself with the notion that other people believed she was on the juvenile side of forty at least.

She was very kind to me always; indeed, everybody at the monastery was kind, and she treated me as I was rushing off to Madame's parlour.

"My dear," she said, gently, "I am afraid there is bad news."

"Bad news for me?"

"Indeed! I fear so. There is a gentleman, and he and Madame are talking so very earnestly, and Madame looks troubled. I hope I am wrong. But I thought I would tell you."

"What bad news could there possibly be for me?" I asked myself, as I hastened to Madame's parlour. There was not much in the outside world, good or bad, that could interest me much. But I saw at a glance that something was wrong when I entered the room, and saw Madame's troubled face. She held a letter in her hand, and a gentleman, whom I had never seen, sat opposite to her also, looking troubled and perplexed. He started and stared at the sight of me, as if he were rather frightened.

"Is this the young lady?" he asked.

"This is Miss Ormsby," Madame said, smiling a little at his evident embarrassment.

"I—I beg your pardon," he gasped. "I expected to see a little girl—a child—and—"

"And Magdalen is grown up. She is not very formidable," Madame said, putting her arm round me and drawing me to her side. "She will give you less trouble than a child

would. My dear"—and she turned to me with such motherly tenderness—"this gentleman has brought you very sad news. Your aunt is very ill, and wants to see you."

"Dying! mademoiselle!" the gentleman said. "It is better that you should know it."

"Dying!"

It was all I could utter in my surprise and distress. "Why was I not told?"

"It has been sudden," he said, gently. There was something very pleasant about his manner. "There has been no time to do anything, but what I have done—come and fetch you. I am the son of the proprietor of Navarre House, and I have come as speedily as I could. Mrs. Ormsby prays to see you before she dies, and I have promised that you shall be there, if it is possible by any known speed of travelling."

## CHAPTER VI.

### A REVELATION.

I WAS shocked beyond measure by the sudden news. I had loved my aunt sincerely, as far as she would let me, and she was the only relative or friend that I had in all the wide world. The prospect of losing her opened out such a dismal and lonely future that I felt quite stunned; she had always been to the fore hitherto, to be consulted and written to about anything that was wanted for me; and the world would seem a wide, dreary place without her in it.

I could not find voice to question the gentleman who had come to be my escort, and who seemed very much troubled at finding me grown beyond childhood, and Madame saved my speaking, and asked the few questions that I would have put. I learned that my aunt had been out of health for some time, and had entrusted the proprietor of Navarre House with a packet of papers for me, in case of anything happening to her suddenly. She seemed to have a morbid dread of proclaiming herself ill, and resisted all entreaties that she would take a rest.

What everyone about her had foreseen for some time had come upon her at last, and she had been stricken with paralysis; and when the younger Mr. Legrange came away on his errand to Wassenhauser, his father was in hourly expectation of another seizure, until the knowledge that her illness would most likely prove fatal was forced upon her by the symptoms themselves. My aunt would not permit of my being written to, but with the knowledge that her days were numbered came a total change of sentiment, and she implored those about her in the most piteous manner to fetch me before it was too late, to let her see me once more before she died; and Dr. Legrange, hardly knowing what to do, despatched his son to fetch me.

"And we will start as soon as the young lady can get ready," he said. "It would be better to catch the night-train if possible. I came through France, and have arranged to go back that way. There will be very little delay anywhere."

I hardly know how I gathered my things together and bade adieu to Wassenhauser. It was done in an incredibly short space of time, and I was going across the river to St. Goar, away from all I had learned to love so dearly, with a strange gentleman, to see the only friend I had in the world die, in a country of which I knew nothing.

Mr. Charles Legrange, for that I found was his name, was a most attentive and agreeable travelling companion. My every wish was anticipated, and my comforts cared for as if I had had a whole retinue of servants at my bidding, and what was more, he knew when to talk to me and when to be silent. He did the most merciful thing he could have done in my distress—he let me alone, and I was able to weep out my excitement and grief, and calm myself, before we had gone a hundred miles.

I learned more about my aunt and the place

she was in from him than I had ever learned from herself. He told me how grieved they all were at her illness, and what a treasure his father and all of them had found her in their establishment. They evidently knew no more than I did of the history of Mrs. Ormsby. She had come to them on the recommendation of the clergyman of the place we had lived in together, who was a personal friend of Dr. Legrange, and no one except myself had ever been to Navarre House to see her.

I wondered wearily as we crossed the Channel—and my escort was asleep, fairly worn out with travelling—whether she would tell me now anything about my father and mother. Since I had grown up and begun to understand a little of the world and its ways, I had taken a painful and persistent fancy into my head. I thought I understood my aunt's reticence and hard manner whenever I attempted to ask any questions about my parents. I thought that I was the child of her brother or sister, and that my birth was a disgrace, and my right to a name or a place in the world nil.

I could not put my ideas about it into words, but the notion had taken a fixed hold of me, and was not to be driven out. I was an out-cast and a pariah from my very cradle, and my very existence reminded her of shame that she would fain forget, and a bitter past that she would have buried if she could.

"We are nearly in now, Miss Ormsby," Charles Legrange said to me as the town of St. Heller rose out of the water as it were, and looked sunny and inviting in the bright early morning. "In an hour we shall be at our journey's end."

"I don't know how to thank you," I said, trying with all my might not to seem as tired as I really was. "You have made the journey seem very short to me."

"I am glad to think so," he replied, eagerly, "I should be glad to know that I had done anything to serve you. I shall remember it with pleasure all my life long."

In less than an hour afterwards the boat was alongside the landing stage, where we were met by a carriage and an old servant, evidently a person of trust.

"Have you brought the young lady, Mr. Charles?" he asked, and my escort said yes, and asked how Mrs. Ormsby was.

"Bad," the old man said, shaking his head. "We think it is only wanting to see miss here that keeps her alive. The doctor he says that's nonsense, and talks about her great vital power. But it's the longing as does it; when she has had her wish she'll just go out like a candle snuff, you see if she doesn't."

All this was intended to be *sotto voce*, but it was quite loud enough for me to hear, and Charles Legrange apologised for the old man's garrulity.

"Pierre is an old servant," he said, "and we allow him many liberties on account of his value. You must forgive him; he means no harm."

"I am sure he does not," I said, heartily, and I came to find he had done Pierre no more than justice when I knew him better.

Dr. Legrange met us at the door of Navarre House, a fine old building of great extent, and greeting me very kindly he drew me into a little side room off the hall and made me drink a glass of wine.

"I am afraid I cannot allow you time to rest now, my poor child," he said, gently, "she is wearing away very fast."

"I am quite ready," I replied, "let me go to her at once, I don't want to rest."

He made me take off my bonnet and calm myself a little, and then he went with me to the room where my aunt lay.

"Nothing can hurt her now," he said, "and she has much to tell you, but her time is short. Another attack may come on at any moment, and she will speak no more."

I was not frightened; I was too much excited for that. But I was grieved to my heart to see the handsome, resolute face of my poor aunt all drawn and distorted, and her nerve-

less hands lying on the counterpane to move no more of themselves in this world.

Every comfort that she could have surrounded her, bearing mute testimony to the estimation in which she was held by her employers. Her eyes brightened as she saw me, and I bent over her and kissed her, my tears falling on her face.

"Dear aunt," I said, "I am so sorry."

"Not aunt!" she said, looking at me with a strange clearness and light in her eyes which was not of this world. "Say mother, Magdalen!"

"Mother!" I gasped out the word in such utter amazement as I had never felt in my life till now. My first thought was that my aunt was wandering in her mind—sensible enough to know me, perhaps, but her intellects clouded on other points. My next, and oh! with what a pang that feeling struck my heart, that my vague notion had been correct, and that my birth was a shame and a disgrace to some one, most of all to her. This would account for her strange coldness to me and her evident desire to keep me out of sight.

I think she understood what was passing in my mind, for as her eyes met mine she said, more gentle than I had ever heard her speak,—

"You have no reason to be ashamed of your mother, child. I am an honest wife."

"Am!" Then my father was alive. I could only press the hand I held in bewilderment and sorrow, and wait for what more she had to say.

"I have written it all down," she said; "and I thought I could die without seeing my child when the time came for me to go, but I couldn't, my dear. I don't think I could have rested in my grave without having seen your face again. I have a legacy to leave you, my daughter; a mission to fulfil when I am laid in the grave."

"I will do anything," I sobbed; "tell me what it is and I will do it."

"It is to find your father and avenge me!"

The words were so startling that they almost took my breath away, and she went on,—

"There is reason—more than you think—I have been deeply wronged. Listen and I will tell you my story shortly, for my time is short. Your father married me, an orphan girl, in America. There must be southern blood in my veins, I think, for I have always been quick to feel and eager to avenge a slight; but I loved him as I think woman never loved man before. I had some little means, and I was happy where I was a governess, for my slender fortune would not keep me.

"He was rich and he swore that he would make my life like a fairy dream with not one unsatisfied wish. We were married in New York—you will find all the necessary certificates in the packet that Dr. Legrange will give you when I am gone—and we were so happy till he brought me to England, where he had an estate and a fine house. It was an Eden, but I found a serpent there. In his house there was a cousin, a pale, creeping thing with no more spirit than a white rabbit, and I had not been in my new home a week before I began to find her out.

"She was always with my husband, always doing all sorts of little things for him under the plea, forsooth, of saving me, for my health was supposed to be delicate just then. I saw through her, and hated her as only a woman of my temperament can hate. The servants knew all about it; my maid could tell me how she had seen her master with Miss Nellie, as she was called, time after time when I was in my own room suspecting nothing. I bore it for a long time, many wretched weeks, and at last the crash came. I found her in his arms, and understood his perfidy and my own misery. I heard him call her his dear Nellie, and saw him lift her false hand to his lips.

"I would not bear any more, and I left his house that night, and made straight for Liverpool. I was on my way to America before they had time to seek me, and I stayed there

till after your birth. Lift me up, I am getting giddy."

"Don't talk any more," I said imploringly, "you say you have written it, mother."

I hardly knew my own voice as I uttered the word, it sounded so strange from my lips, and she smiled as I raised her up.

"It sounds pleasant," she said, "I have put it away from me till now, and now it is too late. I must go on, child, you will not understand else. I left them to their dishonour and their love, and earned my own living as best I could. They thought I was dead, I heard that much; the fact was published enough, and they married. They have sons and daughters, for aught I know; I know there is a son, the heir. Till my child shows herself and avenges her mother by scattering their happy house of cards to the four winds. Magdalen, I charge you with my dying breath to do this! Find your father, and by doing that work my revenge on the woman who wronged me!"

A strength that was not human seemed to uphold her as she spoke, and a fire burned in her eyes that only the desire for revenge could light. I was horrified, though I fully understood what she was feeling; it seemed to me so awful to be so near the threshold of the next world with revenge in the heart, and yet I felt I longed to do her bidding, and work the revenge she wished for on the man who had so wrecked her life.

"You have not told me his name," I said, "my father's name. Who was he, mother?"

Again she met the word with an answering smile, it seemed to soothe her and do her good.

"His name," she said, "I have written it all down. It is a good many years ago, but it is all there—many things I have omitted in telling you, I dare say. His name is—"

She seemed to be wandering a little, and at a sign from Dr. Legrange who was in the room, but some little distance away from the bed, I gave her some restorative out of a cup that he pointed to. It brought her back a little, but she was slipping away, though I did not know it.

"My father's name, dear mother," I said as gently as I could, "what is it?"

"Dunsford!" she replied, distinctly, "Edgar Dunsford. But you must search for him as—since I wrote those papers—he—"

Her voice broke away into a faint whisper, and the words died on her lips. I had never seen death before, but I knew the signs, and cried out in terror. Dr. Legrange came to my side, and laid her down on her pillows. I would have kept my arms about her and held her while she was passing over the threshold of the unseen world, but he whispered me that she would be easier on the pillows. It was over in a moment. What he laid down so gently was not my mother; she had gone to solve for herself the problem of which the highest intellect in this world can know nothing, and to know, maybe in another life, the reason of the trials that had befallen here in this one.

(To be continued.)

CONVERSATION should be pleasant without sourliness, witty without affectation, free without indecency, learned without conceit, and novel without falsehood.

A SUBMARINE BALLOON.—In Naples a submarine balloon has been invented which will sink people to the bottom of the Mediterranean shore waters, where they can enjoy the natural aquaria there to be seen. It is a balloon of steel, with three compartments—one for the actuating mechanism and floating bladder, one for the captain and one for the passengers to the number of eight. There are glass windows for looking out at the fishes, shells and weeds, and the height of the balloon in the water is regulated by means of the collapsible bladder. A telephone connects the balloon, which is captive and cannot float away, with the shore or a boat above.



## YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE SWEETNESS OF FIRST LOVE.

"Mr poor little Belle—my little sister!"

Dudley Wentworth was slowly recovering his head, which he had lost through compassion, and awoke to a consciousness that he was on the brink of doing that for which he had declared that a man ought to be horrified.

The girl, quivering with sudden shyness, drew herself away from him.

"I must go," she said, timidly, putting her hat straight.

"Yes; but where?" looking thoughtfully over the bare, brown fields. "The Chase is not a pleasant place for any one at present."

"To London, I think. I was going to stay there till I could get a place as companion."

"What a child you are!" his eyes softening with wonderful tenderness. "Fancy you in London, wearing out people's doorsteps with a piteous petition to be taken in! Do the Forresters know that you have left them?"

"Not yet; I got out of the window," blushing vividly.

He raised his eyebrows in evident disapprobation.

"Would it be possible to get back again without any fuss?"

"Do you think I must?"

"I do; at least, for the present."

As he spoke he was already maturing a plan for her welfare; but it was not time to broach it.

"You don't know what it will be to me to go back," in a low voice of suppressed emotion. "I would rather, so much rather, go to London."

"Impossible! The seven o'clock train has gone, even if it weren't madness to think of it. Just for a few days bear it, to please me," with his most winning smile.

She turned her face homewards resignedly. Death itself she would have been willing to face if his voice had led her on—how much more a few days of ennui!

"Tell me, why did you do it?" he asked, looking down earnestly into her upturned face, as they stood at the gate of Coombe Lodge.

She turned away.

"I can't."

"My little one, won't you let me help you?" She shook her head.

"It may be years before we meet again."

She started convulsively, and looked up at him with scared eyes.

"I have exchanged into the 13th Hussars in India, and the regiment is going into active service at once, so that I may have to go in the next troopship. I shouldn't like to start feeling quite in the dark about you. What has the General done to you—at least you can tell me that?"

"He has doubted my word," drawing herself up proudly, "and told me I am not fit to be with his daughters! He has shut me up in my room, and told me I am to be a prisoner till he can send me away. He says—Oh! I can't tell you!" the tears running down her cheeks as she recounted her wrongs.

Thoroughly puzzled he raised her hands to his lips, and kissed them, his heart overflowing with sympathy.

"Is he mad? Shall I go in and speak to him?"

"No; you will only make it worse."

"What was it all about?"

"That I can't tell you. Don't ask me!"

"I must wait till you choose to trust me," very gravely. "You won't let me help you, though nothing would please me better."

"You are so kind," stifling a sob. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye. I suppose if I called I should see you?"

"No, not a chance."

"Then it is a real good-bye—a long good-

bye? It is quite possible that I may get knocked over by a bullet. Think of it, Sibel, I say it seriously. We may never meet again."

The girl shook like the leaves of a willow in the wind.

"I ask for no promise—I bind you to nothing; only there is no other girl whom I'm half so sorry to leave, and yours will be the first face that I shall look for when I come back."

She was sobbing now, almost without restraint.

"Still you won't trust me?" in a voice full of pain. "You can't care for me in the least."

Shame tied her tongue. How could she tell him that, under any circumstances whatever, she had met Major Lushington in secret—at midnight—in the moonlight. If she had only told all, she might have been spared a burden of misery; but afraid to risk it, she, who was usually so fond of talking, held her tongue.

"Then there is no more to be said!" releasing her hands. "I was a fool to think you did."

She clasped them together in great agitation; then thinking that she would lose him for ever, she laid one of them in desperation on his sleeve. "Dudley, I do care!" scarcely above a whisper.

A ray of joy passed over the face which a moment before had looked so stern.

"Then, keep your secret, dear, if you like. I am your only friend—your brother, always ready to do anything for you when you will let me. I mustn't keep you—Belle, don't forget me?" looking longingly into the face which he hoped one day to make his own; and the next moment, in spite of all his resolutions, he whispered, softly, "Give a kiss to your brother?" and stole it, his soft monstaches resting lovingly on the fresh pure lips. At least, though he could not claim her, she should go into the world with the seal of his love. It would do no harm to the innocent girl.

There was not a wrong—not a single dishonourable thought in his heart towards her. If fortune were kind to him, and she were faithful, he might come back one day, and ask her to be a soldier's wife; and if, on the other hand, she grew to like another better, it would show that his kiss had left no sting behind.

"Good-bye!" he murmured regretfully. As for one instant he drew her close to his heart, there she rested with a sigh of joy and pain; then raising her head quickly, fled with the speed of a lapwing through the gate, and up the carriage-drive.

Wentworth fastened the gate, which had swung too far, then walked up the road, his thoughts so absorbing that he did not notice that he passed anyone on the way. Priscilla, the head housemaid, had heard the latch of the gate, and a flying footstep on the drive, and thinking to surprise Mary, the under-housemaid, in a flirtation with the groom at the Chase, who was supposed to look on her rosy face with a favourable eye, was much taken aback to find not the servant, but his master.

"Whom had he been after?" Not Miss Judith, certainly, who had long ago sat down with the rest of the family to dinner. Could it be that artful hussy, Miss Fitzgerald? As the idea darted through her mind, she quickened her pace to a run, heard a flop on the path, and the next moment tumbled over a ladder which was lying flat on the ground, and bruised her shins. She scrambled to her knees, and after anathematizing the gardener's carelessness, limped round the corner to the back-door, too much occupied with her pains and bruises to think of anything else. But when she had imparted her small bit of news to her confidant, the cook, and they had both shaken their heads over the mysterious fact that Mr. Wentworth, one of the proudest men in the county, had been seen loitering at the gate at a time of night when any right-minded gentleman ought to have been sitting at his dinner, and that somebody had run away from

him into the gardens of Coombe Lodge, she got up from her chair, and said, with a knowing look out of the corner of her eye:—

"I've quite forgot Miss Fitzgerald's dinner-things, and whilst I'm a-fetching of them, I'll take a look round!"

But when she had fetched the key, and unlocked the prisoner's door, she found nothing to confirm her suspicions.

Sibel was lying on the sofa, looking dreamily into the fire, and apparently as innocent as herself of any communications with a lover outside. The window was fastened, the curtains drawn, and neither hat nor cloak was to be seen upon the bed; and yet Priscilla felt an intuitive conviction that there was something wrong behind the scenes, and determined that Miss Judith should know all the facts of the case.

The hard, cold woman had borne a grudge to Sibel ever since her first entry into the house. She pretended to think it unjust that another inmate should be added to the household without an increase to her wages, and any services she had to render to Miss Fitzgerald were performed unwillingly and against the grain. She was the only one of the servants who had not sympathized with her in her disgrace.

Foster, the gardener, whose little boy she taught in the Sunday-school, was devoted to her. Mary, the under-housemaid, had been ready to cry over her misfortunes. The cook thought it her duty to seem neutral, although she said in a significant way to Pierce, the butler, "She had no liking for them stuck-up natures, which never got into no mischief for a bit of fun."

To which the butler replied, with a solemn shake of his head, "There's always a plenty of mischief amongst the petticoats, only some of 'em take precious good care not to be found out."

Rose came to the door and whispered a tearful "good-night," then went miserably off to bed.

Sibel blessed her for her affection, but felt as if she deserved no pity. Dudley Wentworth had told her that he loved her, and her heart was singing a psalm of joy. She was quite content to leave her fate in his hands. He had promised to think for her, so that she might let her puzzled brain rest. What mattered it if her narrow-minded uncle chose to disapprove of her? Dudley had an infinitely higher standard than any of them, and yet had thought her worthy of his interest. She had not told him, but what did it signify? She had done no wrong, only committed a childish folly; and so she hugged herself into a false security, forgetting that in this world folly is apt to pay a heavier price than sin.

The fire died out, the house grew very silent; it was time to go to bed.

So ended the first day of captivity, and a gleam of light had already appeared beyond the storm clouds.

The next day her door was left unlocked, and she was informed that she might consider the school-room as her sitting-room.

Mrs. Forrester, looking pale and worried, came to see her just before luncheon. She did not sit down, but leant against the back of a chair as if glad of its support.

Sibel rose from her seat, but said nothing, feeling an inward pity for her aunt, whose gentle nature often strove vainly against her husband's harshness.

"Only one word. I can't stay to discuss anything with you," she began, tremulously. "Just tell me if you wrote that dreadful letter?"

"No, aunt, I never wrote it!"

"Let me see, there's something else I want to say," putting her hand to her head, which always ached with the slightest agitation. "If you didn't, why did you go and meet that horrid man?"

"I did not go and meet him," drawing herself up proudly. "If I had known that he was there, nothing would have induced me to go."

"My dear child, tell me who did write that letter?"

"I can't. I promised not to," turning away.

"But it could do no harm to tell me, and nothing else will convince your uncle."

"Then nothing will. He doubts my word, and I no longer care what he thinks of me!"

Mrs. Forrester looked into the pale indignant face, and sighed. "Then there is no use in my staying"—she paused, afraid of expressing the pity she felt. The girl looked so white—if she fell ill she would never forgive herself. Drawing her shawl over her shoulders, she walked slowly to the door.

"Your uncle wishes you to have regular exercise."

"Like the prisoners at Newgate," with a scornful curl of her lip. In her fiery independence she had small sympathy with those who felt the right, and lacked the courage to do it.

"I don't know about them," with a pained gentleness that filled the wayward heart with compunction; "but you can have your pony for two hours every day."

"I have no wish to go out," she said, quietly.

"But you will be ill," piteously.

"If I am, I shall be the sooner off your hands."

With this pitiless remark the conversation closed, and Mrs. Forrester went downstairs wiping her eyes as she sighed, feeling that the good she had done was small.

"That was brutal of me," said Sibel, in passionate self-reproach, addressing her remark to the fire. "Aunt is so weak that uncle twists her round his fingers, but she means well, poor thing, and might have been quite nice if she had had a man, not a monster, for her husband. I wish I hadn't hurt her!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A PEER TO THE RESCUE.

JUDITH'S mind was full of vague suspicions concerning her cousin, for which she was at a loss to account when questioned by Rose. Priscilla had mentioned to Miss Wood, the maid, and Miss Wood had casually let out to her mistress, the mysterious circumstances about Mr. Wentworth at the gate, and the flying feet in the carriage drive; and although it never occurred to her that Sibel could have descended from her window by a ladder, she had an uneasy conviction that Dudley Wentworth was there on her account. To do her justice, she was really scandalised by her cousin's supposed conduct, and decided that the only way to bring her to a sense of proper shame was by relegating her to Coventry. Phil returned at the end of a week, full of his doings at Woolwich, and asked for Sibel in an unconcerned manner as he could manage.

"Don't talk of her," said Judith, with sad gravity.

"Gone mad, or eloped?" with his hands in his pocket.

"Hush! don't joke about it. You know what papa found out just before she went?"

"Yes! Anything fresh?" his eyes looking unusually eager.

"Nothing. She is as obstinate as ever, and won't confess."

"Perhaps she has nothing to confess."

"That's right, Phil," exclaimed Rosa, quickly. "It is such an awful shame to condemn her, when she might be in the right all the time."

"I should think it was. Lushington's in an awful wax."

"You didn't tell him?" from both their voices, rising almost to a scream.

"Of course I did. He proposed to write to his governor, but I told him it was no manner of use; he might just as well put his letter into the fire. However, he is going to put it into the hands of someone else."

"And our disgrace will be known to the county!" Judith rose from her seat in a state

of excitement. "Fancy if it gets to Dudley Wentworth's ears!"

"Of course it will. He's Lushington's particular chum. I shouldn't wonder if he came marching down here with his nose in the air, to give us a lecture all round. He won't stand her being kept a prisoner, I can tell you that," enjoying the confusion he had created.

"Phil, you are enough to drive one mad. What possessed you to blab it out to the first person you came across?"

"Because the first person, as you call him, happened to be most particularly concerned in it, or rather in her. There'll be no end of a row if this goes on. Sibel isn't a nobody to be put upon like a common dependant, and Guy may be coming home any day. I should like to know if any of you would dare to look him in the face."

"Sibel wouldn't, for one," with a malicious smile.

"I guess she would. She's not the first pretty girl who met her lover by moonlight." He went out of the room, and upstairs, walking straight into the school-room, as if it were a matter of course.

Sibel was reading by the firelight, but she looked up eagerly, as he came in. "Well?"

"Here's a letter for you, from Lushington."

She took it from his hand, looking at it doubtfully, as if she had half a mind not to open it. "What does he write to me for?"

"Better read it and see. A friend is not to be despised," playing with the china ornaments on the mantelpiece.

"No, indeed," with a sigh, turning the square envelope round, examining the bold handwriting, and attempting to decipher the red and gold monogram. She felt a wonderful disinclination to open it, but the aggravating boy evidently would not talk till she had. Then she tore the envelope right across, and pulled out the letter. Her colour rose as she read it:—

"Royal Artillery Barracks, Woolwich.

"DEAREST MISS FITZGERALD,—

"What can I do for you? My whole life is at your service. Say the word, and I'll come to you at once. Would it be any good if I told that uncle of yours that it was entirely my own fault from beginning to end? I should like to punch his head!"

"One line by return of post. (Phil has engaged to post it) to—Yours devotedly,

"HAROLD LUSHINGTON."

"Entirely his fault, he says, when it was yours," looking up into her cousin's face with puzzled eyes.

"I know, but he won't believe it. He swears that you knew he was coming, or you never would have gone to the Knoll at that time of night."

"Phil, I trusted you!" with indignant scorn, as she tore the letter to pieces, and flung them into the fire.

"I did my best," sullenly.

"If you had, he would have believed you. I declare you deserve that I should run straight down to my uncle, and tell him exactly what you have done."

"Do if you like. I'll be hanged if I wouldn't like it. Lushington says I'm sure to have my commission directly, and of course the governor would make me give it up; but still, anything is better than hating myself as I do now. I know I'm not fit to look you in the face," and with a great gulp, "you despise me."

"One lie more or less is nothing to a Forrester."

"Is that your opinion of me?" stung to the quick.

"Very well then, I can't stand it any longer. Look here, Belle, I am not quite such a mean fellow as you fancy. You think it's nothing to me to come home and find you moping up here by yourself, and treated no better than a dog, but I tell you it cuts me up awfully. I can't stand it. I shall go to the governor this instant and tell him the truth. He may kick me out of the house if he likes, but at least I shan't be ashamed of myself when I get there." He moved towards the

door, but she flung her arms round him and stopped him.

"Now don't be a goose, Phil," half crying.

"I wanted you to be sorry, that's all."

"But it's not enough," trying to push her away.

"Yes, it will quite do. I wouldn't have you spoil your life for anything."

"But you'll be ashamed of me," his under lip trembling.

"No, I won't. You wanted to do your duty, but I wouldn't let you; and, after all, what good would it do? It would make you all still more miserable, and I should never forgive your father, and nothing could make me stay here."

"You will bring it up against me for the rest of your life?"

"Not I. I wouldn't be so mean. Oh, Phil! I could love you better than any of them if you would always be a man and stick to what you said."

"And when I try you won't let me."

"But I like you to try, putting her head carelessly on the boy's shoulder."

"Belle, you are a brick!" looking with real affection into her weary face. "I shall go to the dogs without you."

"No, you must do your best, and some day," it seemed even to her hopeful disposition very far off, "I shall be proud of you."

"Yes," his lip curling in self-contempt, "proud of the cur who let a woman bear the blame."

She lifted up her face and kissed him. "You have nothing to do with the past. Be a good boy for the future."

There was a long pause; the boy's heart was working with nobler emotions than he had ever felt before—a girl's self-sacrifice made him resolve to be unselfish—a girl's courage made him determine to be brave. He looked back on his past life with eyes from which the scales had fallen. His shifty evasions no longer made him proud of his own cleverness, and never again would he be so ready to boast that he had escaped with a whole skin out of a scrape, whilst others were scratched or wounded.

"Now go. I quite forget you ought not to be here."

"Rot!"

"Judith avoids me like a parish, and poor little Rose is obliged to do the same."

"Then I'll stick to you like glue. Wherever you are I shall come to you, and if they look you up I shall get in at the window."

She shook her head.

"Your father will be angry."

"Never mind. There's no end to the things that I ought to do for you. I say, write your letter, and I'll post it to-night."

"There is no answer."

"No answer! Dashed hand on Lushington. He'll be a wally done."

"Your father shall never be able to say that I entered into a clandestine correspondence with him. You can tell him that I am much obliged to him, but he can do me no good whatever."

"He would like it ten thousand times better if you wrote it yourself."

"Then he won't get it. Go, there's a good fellow! I really want you to go."

"Depend upon it, he will write to Wentworth."

She started and turned pale.

"For Heaven's sake, no! I would rather die than he should know it!"

"Humph! I'm afraid your end must be near."

"Philip!" came in a stentorian voice from the bottom of the stairs.

"By Jove! there's the governor! Ta, ta, keep up your spirits."

"Philip!" in a still louder tone.

"Oh, hang it all, he needn't be in such confounded hurry! Got plenty of books?"

"Yes, yes; go!"

He left the room with an air of independent ease but looked tolerably sheepish when he found his father waiting for him in the hall. There was something in General Forrester's



which always took the courage out of him, as if by a magnetic spell.

"I thought you knew that it was my express order that no one should hold any communication whatever with your cousin?"

"There was no harm in talking to her a bit," with sullen defiance.

"I say there is harm, and I'll trouble you not to contradict me. I have had the most extraordinary letter from Wentworth. I don't know if it is you who have been spreading the family disgrace abroad?" with a sharp look at his son's face.

"I haven't seen him since the blow-up."

"Nor written to him?" his two eyes more like gimlets than ever.

"Certainly not! I never did in all my life!"

"Humph! It's very strange. I don't know what to think of it. How on earth it came to his ears I can't think—unless the girl wrote to him herself!"

"I'd take my oath she hasn't!" he said, with conviction, thankful to get a chance of standing up for her, without inculpating himself.

"Then who has? Your mother can't make it out, nor more can I."

The General turned off into the library, and Phil, shrugging his shoulders, opened the drawing-room door.

Mrs. Forrester was lying on the sofa, Rose sitting on the fender-stool close to her feet, Judith standing by the table, with a crimson patch on either cheek. She turned round as her brother came in.

"Did you ever hear anything like it in all your life?"

"What's up?" looking from one to the other with lively curiosity.

"Lord Wentworth wants to know if we will kindly allow Miss Fitzgerald to live with him as a daughter"—with a vicious emphasis on the word—"during the absence of his son! Hugh will be at Oxford, and he dreads the loneliness!"

"Hurrah!" throwing a paper-knife up into the air, and catching it. "I knew that Wentworth would not allow her to be sat upon. What on earth do you look so glum for?"

"You've no sense at all," she said, impatiently. "You can't see what a disgrace all this is to the family."

"A disgrace to be the adopted daughter of a peer? No, I don't see that at all."

"She won't be that. They only ask her out of charity."

"Charity begins at home. They want her, and I'm precious glad to hear it."

"But it is hard on Judith," said Mrs. Forrester gently. "She feels that it is her place to be with the poor old man, and it is not pleasant to be passed over."

"If Judy has been setting her cap at Dudley I could have told her that it was waste of trouble," with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

"She didn't!" exclaimed Rose, indignantly.

"Then why is she making such a kick-up?"

"Sibel is a nasty, sly, intriguing thing!" and Judith wiped her eyes.

"Stop there!" cried Phil, his cheeks glowing. "She wouldn't do a mean thing to save her life. She can't help being the prettiest little thing in the county, and you are all green with jealousy. Wentworth has the sense to appreciate her, and you don't like it; but Judy, my dear, you had better give it up, it's quite hopeless."

Judith drew herself up in speechless indignation; but at that moment the General put his head in at the door, and looking at his son, said gravely—

"Mind, not a word of this to your cousin. I shall inform her myself of the proposal when I have had time to consider it. Hadn't you better go to bed," turning to his wife, who looked aered out.

"Tell me first what you have decided to do. I suppose it will be the best thing for the poor girl?"

"I can't say! I think so. It is a great deal more than she deserves."

"Oh, papa, don't let her go to them," said Judith, imploringly.

"I can't offend Wentworth, and it will save me some embarrassment," veering round again through natural perversity.

"It is the best thing that could have happened," said Phil, with new courage.

"Your opinion was not asked," said his father, severely, as he shut the door.

## CHAPTER IX.

WILL YOU HAVE ME—"YES" OR "NO?"

THE monotonous days passed wearily, one so much like the other that if it had not been for Sunday Sibel Fitzgerald would have almost lost the count of time.

Wentworth Church was just inside the precincts of the Chase, a stone building with an ivied tower, and a picturesque churchyard, where the white crosses in summer-time gleamed through a wealth of roses.

Sibel went to church by herself, feeling lonely and sad to the last degree. The villagers passed her by in twos and threes; she seemed to be the only one who had nobody to bear her company. Her cheeks gained a sudden accession of colour, and she forgot her depression as a well-known figure in Sunday frock and tall hat came striding down the narrow pathway which was the nearest way to the house.

They met at the porch—the trembling all over with secret joy; he, cool, calm, and reserved, as if offended past forgiveness.

He took off his hat, and his stern mouth never relaxed into a smile. Then he stepped aside for her to pass first, without one word of the commonest form of greeting; and the poor girl, dazed by the sudden blow, stumbled forward into the darkened church, feeling like a favourite hound which had been kicked by a beloved master.

She slipped into a quiet corner, and tried to say her prayers, but her thoughts wandered continually to the man who had stolen her kisses and won her love, only to cast her off in the time of trouble. She had expected so little—only a smile, and a shake of the hands—and she had got nothing more than what he must have given to the merest stranger. Too indignant to cry she stood up during the psalms with such a white, defiant face, that it disturbed the peace of those who chanced to look that way; and Dudley Wentworth, though he never seemed to glance in that direction, saw nothing else, even when his eyes were fixed on his prayer-book.

"So young, so fair, so false," he said to himself, as he took up his hat as soon as the service was over, and walked out of church, without waiting to speak to anyone—a proceeding which disconcerted General Forrester, who had counted upon catching him, and giving him his answer in person.

Another day had gone, and the poor little outcast, having finished her solitary dinner, and sent away the tray, was trying to cheer herself up by writing to her brother—not that she meant to tell him all that had happened, for she felt that such news would be enough to bring him straight back from India, and the consequences to his prospects might be fatal. In her utter selfishness she would rather suffer alone, though she was always ready to share the sorrows of others. It was owing to this, as well as to her beauty, that she gained a friend wherever she went. Her guileless nature shone out of her eyes, and her smile was enough "to wile the babe from its mother's breast."

Yet now, in the day of sorrow, all men had deserted her, and she was alone. She sighed, and in answer to the sigh a handful of gravel was thrown up at the window. She started, dropped her pen, then telling herself it was only Phil, picked it up again, and put it in the inkstand. The signal was repeated. Smiling at his impatience, she rose from her seat, drew back the curtains, and threw up the

sash. The next moment a dark figure, which had been perched on the sill, jumped into the room, and to her horror and dismay she saw—not Phil, but Major Lushington! Whilst she stood petrified with surprise, the artilleryman had all his wits about him. He shut the window, drew the curtains, crossed the room, and locked the door, then he turned to her, his dark eyes gleaming.

"You would not send me an answer, so I was obliged to fetch it in person. What can I do for you?" holding out his hands.

She put her own behind her back, and looked up at him indignantly. "Nothing, only leave me at once!"

"Hardly!" with a little laugh, "after running all sorts of risks to get this chance. Phil is waiting outside on guard, and I am acting under Wentworth's advice. Will that satisfy you?"

She started, and turned as white as her dress.

"Did Mr. Wentworth send you?" speaking very slowly.

"Yes; that is to say, he thought I had better come. I could only get a few hours' leave—so walked down directly dinner was over. Now, haven't you a word to say to me?"

She let him lead her to the sofa, feeling as if she were in a dream.

"My poor little thing," bending over her fondly. "I have been so sorry for you. And to think it was for my sake you got into the scrape!"

"Through Phil and no one else, Major Lushington," looking up into his pale, determined face, with earnest eyes which seemed accessible to its beauty. "If you were found here you would compromise me fatally."

"I have done it already," his voice sinking almost to a whisper. "I would have given anything to prevent it. It was not entirely my fault—you must own that."

"But no one need know anything about it."

"It is known. Sibel, there is only one way out of the scrape," stooping still lower, till his breath fanned the curls on her forehead. "Say that you will marry me, and the world will forget all about it."

She looked up at him with frightened eyes.

"Oh, no! I can't!"

"Is it such a dreadful fate?" stretching his arm behind her along the back of the sofa. "You didn't seem to hate me at Woolwich!"

"Do you think I would let any man take me out of pity?" her cheeks flaming—her eyes blazing through angry tears.

"Not out of pity, darling! When Wentworth said it was the only thing I could do, my heart jumped at it. I never was so pleased in my life."

"What did he say of me?"—her tone like a wail.

"Of you?" hesitating. "You know he is a man who ought to have been born in another century. A woman to please him must be nothing less than an angel. He really carries it too far."

A shiver passed through her, as she thought of their parting at the gate, when the fair proud face had softened, and his eyes spoke the love which his lips scarcely dared to utter. Was it a dream!

"You haven't answered me, and there's no time to lose. Will you have me, 'yes' or 'no?' Darling, I will do my best to make you happy."

"He wished it?" in a low voice, still harping on that discordant string.

"I don't know about wishing it," some irritation in his voice, "for he spoke of it as no concern of his, but he said it was the only way."

"And all because I met you by accident at the Wishing Well? It seems such a small thing to make such a fuss about."

"A small thing?" an amused smile curling the tips of his moustaches. "Such accidents as those are deliciously dangerous."

Something in the words repelled her, and she got up and stood by the fireplace. Her fate was in her hands, to do with as she liked



["I WILL NOT GO TILL I HAVE YOUR PROMISE," CRIED THE MAJOR.]

—another minute, and it might have passed from hers to his. No wonder that her brain was in a whirl, and she scarcely knew what she did or said.

Harold Lushington had perfect reliance in his own powers of fascination, although a glimmering of the truth respecting Wentworth had flashed into his mind. How many hearts had he broken on his wayward way through life? Their number was forgotten on earth, but perhaps it was known in Heaven. This child could not escape him. The harder she was to win the more determined he was to have her; not that matrimony was tempting to him. No! he was in no hurry to be enslaved by a wedding-ring, but she must be pledged to him before he left that night; he must have the right to hold her in his arms, and taste the sweetness of her dainty lips.

He came behind her, and his arm stole softly round the supple waist. He saw her bosom heaving as her heart throbbed tumultuously, but he had read the passion-beats of love too often to be dismayed. "Sibel," he said, in a whisper as soft as a mother's to her babe, "You must love me! Darling, is it so hard?"

She turned round and looked at him with mournful despairing eyes. "Is it for my sake, or yours?"

"For mine, dearest! I cannot live without you."

Still she strove against her fate. "You told me you liked to be free?"

"Yes, free to love anyone, just as I choose. If I had been married, where should I have been now? Only able to do you harm instead of good. Only able to offer you a love from which perhaps you'd have shrunk."

"And now—now—" twisting her fingers together as if in pain.

"And now—you have no choice," his chest heaving. "You must let me take you, and make you my own, like this, dearest."

He clasped his arms round her, and kissed her with all the passion of his nature.

She shuddered from head to foot.

At that moment there was an imperative knock at the door. They both started convulsively. "Oh, go—go," she panted.

"Not till I have your promise," his eyes glowing like a flame. His passion once roused, fear of death would not have made him go till she had yielded.

An impatient hand rattled the handle of the door, and the General called out, "Sibel, what are you about? Let me in at once!"

"Promise!" whispered the Major, still holding her tight.

"I promise," she said, faintly, and snatching another kiss, he sped on tip-toe to the window. Sibel was already at the door, when he threw up the sash, and saw with dismay that the ladder had gone. She turned the key, for her uncle was storming outside to such an extent that she did not dare to wait another minute, and the only thing he could do was to wrap the curtains closely round him, and hope to escape observation.

The General came in purple with rage.

"What do you mean by locking me out?"

"You locked me in," she said, tremulously, "so surely I had the right to do the same."

"Intolerable impertinence," glaring suspiciously round the room. "You've been up to some mischief I'd lay any money!"

Then for the first time, through catching sight of the toe of a boot, she became aware that Major Lushington was still in the room. Trembling with fright she pretended that there was something wrong with the lamp, and, instead of turning it up, put it out.

The General anathematized her carelessness, and gave another glance round the room, haunted by the suspicion that she was keeping something from him. The curtains away to and fro attracted his attention.

"You've got the window open," glaring at her as if he thought she were cracked.

"Yes, I know; the room was hot. Never mind," placing herself in front of him. "I suppose you have something to say to me."

"I have, but I shall wait till I have shut that window. Get out of the way, girl!" trying to pass her.

"But uncle," catching hold of his sleeve in her desperation, "I—I—shall faint if it's shut!"

"Are you in your senses?"—he really began to doubt it. "The wind is in the north-east, and I don't want a chill on the liver if you do."

He put her on one side, and stepped quickly forwards—whilst Sibel held her breath. He pulled back the curtain in his impatient manner, so that every ring rattled, and two came off. She scarcely dared to lift her eyes, her heart beat so that she was almost suffocated; a singing came in her ears, so that she had to cling on to the table to save herself from dropping on the floor. Then as no exclamation came from the General, except a ugh! of disgust as the wind blew in his face, she took courage—and saw that there was nothing to be seen but the open sash and a patch of starlit sky.

The Major was gone, and she was saved.

(To be continued.)

**HEN SECRET.**—A lady whose beautiful plants are the delight of her life and the envy of all her acquaintances, reveals the following secret of success: The soil is about two-thirds good garden soil, and the rest is sand. It is kept light and loose about the roots; they are watered as they appear to need it, and not according to any particular rule; but the chief reason for this wonderful growth and bloom is this: "When any of the leaves wither and fall, instead of picking them up and throwing them away, I make little rolls of them, and tuck them down in the earth and let them decay; and this is the only fertilizer I have ever used. This," she added modestly, "seems to be Nature's way. And the plants that have the afternoon sun only, grow and rival those that have the morning sun."





["I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TELL YOU, VIVIEN," SAID BRUCE. "MOTHER, YOU WILL EXCUSE US?"]

NOVELETTE.]

## A DAUGHTER OF THE PEOPLE.

### CHAPTER I.

DR. RYLAND looked from his surgery window into the busy street. There was a watchful expression in his hazel eyes, and manifest impatience in his manner. He thought, "She is later than usual to-day, I shall be obliged to go without seeing her." But before the thought had passed away the flush on his good-looking face showed his waiting and watching were rewarded. He drew back, however, so as to escape notice, and presently a young lady passed the window.

She was of medium height, slim, and light of foot; her face, without being actually pretty, was sweet and interesting, and lit up by a pair of great grey eyes; and the chestnut hair, drawn in a coil low upon the white throat, was allowed to fall in curly masses round the broad brow.

Unconscious that she was being watched she walked quickly on, and a turn in the street soon hid her from Dr. Ryland.

Then he took his hat, and going out stepped into the carriage which had so long awaited him, and went about his professional duties. But all through the day the sweet face of the unknown girl haunted him; he grew angry at the persistence with which his thoughts turned to her; he did not even know her name, until six weeks ago had never seen her; then one morning, as he stood before his window, she had passed, and since then he had watched for her always at the same hour. He fancied that she was a daily governess; that she was a lady he did not doubt; and it never entered his mind that she could be a "shop-girl," a class he had been led to regard as frivolous, ignorant, and foolish, an idea which obtains amongst men of the intellectual as much as the "masher" type. But be she what she might

he was anxious to know her. He found himself wondering if her voice was sweet as her eyes and face, and he knew in his heart of hearts that his interest in her was of no ordinary nature. Her coming and going made his pulse beat faster and the light flash into his eyes, and she was so supremely unconscious of him!

Once or twice he had asked his friends about her, but they were unable to give him any information. No one in his circle appeared to know her, and he could only trust a happy chance might one day bring them together. But as the weeks wore by he saw with a feeling of pain that the girl's face grew paler and thinner and her step slower, and his profession told him she was really ill.

One morning she did not pass at the usual hour, and all day long the young man was foolishly disturbed and anxious concerning her; he was so silent at luncheon that his mother and cousin rallied him, but did not succeed in rousing him, and at last the girl said gently,—

"What is wrong, Bruce?"

"Nothing; you are full of fancies, Vivien," and the lovely fair face flushed with pain at the petulance in his tone.

Then he went out, and drove once more to the surgery, which was half-a-mile from his residence.

Day after day and still no sight of her, and so a week passed.

One evening when he thought that his visits for the day were over, a little girl stopped him at the surgery door and asked,—

"Are you Dr. Ryland, please?"

Rather vexed at the delay he answered yes, and the child said,—

"Will you please go down to number five, Gee-street—it is a shop, sir, and Mrs. Vernon keeps it."

"And is it Mrs. Vernon that wants me?"

"Yes, 'cause her daughter is ill."

"Very well; say I will come."

He turned to give a few directions to his

assistant, and then drove rapidly through the aristocratic quarter of the town, reaching at last the streets sacred to the middle class of Arleyford. Finally he stopped before a small stationery shop, entering which he was met by a pale, refined widow woman.

Even as he followed her upstairs something in her face seemed familiar to him, and he asked,—

"Have I met you before, Mrs. Vernon? I feel as though I have."

"I believe not," quietly, and opening a door she ushered him into a small, pretty room.

"Desirée, here is Doctor Ryland."

A girl seated in a low chair, her head supported by pillows, turned her face towards him, and he could not repress a start when he saw it was the girl who had so greatly interested him, and he felt bitterly disappointed to find that she was, after all, only a Daughter of the People. But he sat down quietly by her, and talked for some time in a strictly professional way, said there was really no cause for Mrs. Vernon's anxiety; she was very weak; in fact, it was a case of general debility, but a little rest would speedily restore her, if not to a state of robustness, yet to something like health. He advised that she should have a month at some warm place; then she looked up startled.

"I cannot do that; they would not keep my situation open for me."

"I presume you are a governess—it must be fearfully hard work, teaching dull—"

"But I am not a governess: I am a drapers' assistant!"

The voice was low, sweet and refined, but the words staggered Bruce Ryland more than he could tell. He had enveloped her with a halo of romance; had told himself she was if poor, yet a lady born, and now he found her the daughter of a small shopkeeper, and herself one of that most maligned, hardworking class called shop-girls. He comforted himself after he left her with the reflection that, perhaps, she had seen "better days," at

all events—one day he would ask her. She was so sweet to look upon, so refined in voice and manner, that he disliked relinquishing the idea that she was of his own class. Foolishly he thought of her all night, how lovely she was to him; her name, too, so admirably suited her, beautiful and quaint—"Desirée Vernon." Was she of French extraction? Her name seemed to imply she was. He called himself by a word the reverse of complimentary, because he could not forget her, and all the while was intensely glad that he should see her on the morrow. He reserved the call at Gee-street until last on the same principle as the boy, who, having both bread and cake, ate the bread first, saying "he kept the best till last, as it wouldn't do to get Jack upon gentleman."

He found Mrs. Vernon busy with customers, so he went up alone and found Desirée sitting before the fire in her favourite chair.

"What report have you to make of yourself?" he said, sitting down beside her, and placing his fingers on the delicate blue-veined wrist.

"I am afraid," in a soft voice, "that I am not better, but," with a little smile, "I must be quite well by the close of the week; I cannot stay at home longer!"

"Not if I tell you it would be madness to go?"

"No; you don't understand. If I am not at my post next Monday another will be placed there."

"That is very unjust."

"The autumn season has begun, and we are very busy; and, believe me, Mr. Palmer, my employer, is far from unreasonable. But whilst I am away the other girls have extra duty, and it is hard on them."

"Are the working hours long?"

"Yes; we go at nine, and leave at eight," only on Saturdays we are later. Then it is generally eleven before the shop closes. At some places it is worse."

He muttered something like an imprecation, then said,—

"But I thought women were protected by law, and could not be compelled to work such hours."

She laughed a trifle bitterly. "Dressmakers and milliners are certainly protected, but the legislators have not time to think of the 'shop-girls.'"

"It must be an antipathetic life to you," with such an unmistakable look of admiration, that Desirée blushed hotly. Still she said quietly,—

"It is, especially at times; but I always knew I must earn my living—my father was a compositor—and now I am glad I can do so. It is such a help to mother."

"Not a lady by birth!" Why should he be so disappointed, and yet he was. He rose hastily, and saying he would call on the morrow went away. "I am a fool!" he thought, "why should I care about the girl?" but the glamour of her loveliness followed him home, and clung about him through the long evening.

He went with his mother and Vivien and Carmo to a concert held in the Guildhall, but he was restless and inattentive, and the singers seemed to him to sing but one word, and that one was Desirée.

Beautiful Vivien, watching her cousin, was ill at ease, unhappy. She pondered in her heart what cause he had for vexation, and wished that she could share it. "For him," she told herself, "she could die," and she had long cherished a hope that one day he would ask her to be his wife. This hope Mrs. Ryland had fostered through all the years of Vivien's girlhood, not only because the girl was rich and beautiful, but because she was dear to her as a daughter.

Bruce knew very well his mother wished the marriage, but he did not guess that Vivien loved him with the whole strength of an undisciplined heart; and he laughed at the idea of a union between himself and the beautiful blonde. More than ever now did he feel it impossible that such a thing could be, having

looked into Desirée's eyes, and heard her low sweet voice.

The next morning he went once again to Gee-street to find Desirée no better. Her mother was sitting with her, and he felt disappointed; but after awhile Mrs. Vernon was called into the shop, and the two were alone together.

"What do you find to do all day? Tell me how you amuse yourself?"

"Principally by reading; but I am very anxious to return to business."

"Promise you will not go until I give you permission."

"I am afraid I cannot," and the sweet face flushed under his scrutiny, and for a moment her heart beat fast. She did not know why.

"I must insist upon obedience, for your own sake," then laughing, "and for the sake of my medical reputation. But seriously, Miss Vernon, you must not do anything for some time."

His heart ached for her as he saw the frightened look in her lovely eyes, and he knew that she feared the loss of her little earnings would bring great anxiety to her mother.

"You must not be anxious. If you like I will see Mr. Palmer for you."

"That is unnecessary, thank you," still with a troubled look, "and I shall hope still that I may be well enough to return on Monday."

After a pause, he said rather awkwardly,— "Will you think me curious if I ask, are you strictly English?"

"Oh, no. What leads you to suppose I am not?"

"Your name; it is decidedly French."

"My mother had a friend—a Frenchwoman, I was christened after her; but my father was English, and so is my mother."

The week wore away, and Desirée found herself quite unable to return to business. Day after day Bruce Ryland came and went, always cheerful, always kind, and the girl began to look eagerly for his coming, and soon to grieve when he went away. A dangerous joy stole over her, and a feeling she called friendship, but which in her heart she faintly realised was love.

Mrs. Vernon, dear, unsuspecting soul, left them often alone, never thinking the aristocratic young doctor would love a "daughter of the people," or that her child would lose her heart to him.

On a dull day in November Bruce sat with Desirée; her sweet face was flushed, and in her grey eyes was shining a great content. He was very silent, perhaps because he dared not speak of what was in his heart, perhaps because he questioned if his love could endure all that a marriage with Desirée might mean for him. At last he said,—

"So you are determined to return to-morrow, Miss Vernon?"

"Oh, yes. I am almost well, and Mr. Palmer has been exceptionally kind."

"I wish you were never going back again, Desirée!"

Her eyes fell before his eager, passionate look, and she was silent. For a moment he thought she was angry at his familiarity, and he asked, gravely,—

"Are you vexed that I called you Desirée?"

"No," very softly.

"It hurts me to think you must go back to hard and uncongenial toil; then suddenly, passionately, "Desirée, are you blind? Have you not seen it all?"

He leaned over her chair, and his face was close to hers. She trembled, but did not shrink from him, and he knelt beside her so that he should bring his face to the level of hers.

"Oh, my love—my love!" he cried. "I had meant to go away without telling you of it, but I could not. Desirée, can you send me away?"

She said in a voice tremulous with love, joy, and a fear that all this gladness was not for her,—

"Have you counted the cost of this?"

"Yes; and come what may I will never give you up if you will but confess you love me. Ever since I first saw you I loved you, and wanted you for myself. Now, Desirée!"

and the young man paused breathless, waiting her reply.

"I am so poor, so ignorant, but—but, oh! I love you with all my heart."

He could have laughed in his joy and triumph as he caught her in his arms and kissed her madly, and she did not rebuke his boldness, but only lay her head upon his breast, listening in a dreamlike way to his impassioned words, half doubting that all this joy was real, fearing she might wake and find it all a dream.

Then he said quickly, "What will my mother say? You must not mind if she is vexed at first—she will soon love you for your own sake and mine. Why do you look so afraid?"

"I was thinking if your mother should dislike me—that would be terrible, Mr. Ryland."

"Can't you say Bruce. Believe me, it is not difficult."

"To me it appears so, but I will try."

## CHAPTER II.

BRUCE RYLAND was so happy in his engagement that he was unwilling to bring a cloud over his sky, and he knew full well that his mother would be angry and hurt when she learned the truth; she had so set her heart upon a marriage between the cousins that her disappointment on hearing it could not but be very keen. Besides this, she was so proud of her ancient name, that she would think Desirée Vernon no fit wife for her son. So for many days Bruce kept his secret, but was so gay, so evidently happy, that Mrs. Ryland and Vivien were curious. Desirée meanwhile had returned to business, and many were the questions of her companions as to who had placed the handsome engagement ring upon her finger. After much blushing and pretty confusion she confessed her lover's name, and was overwhelmed with their cordial congratulations.

That night when Bruce was leaving her he said, gravely,—

"I've been thinking, Desirée, that I am not acting quite honourably in keeping the fact of our engagement from my mother. I shall tell her to-night."

The girl clung to him.

"Do you think, Bruce, she will be very angry?"

He was too strictly truthful to speak falsely to her, even for her comfort, so he said,—

"I do think she will be vexed, my darling; but when she has seen you she will forgive us, and I am vain enough to fancy that with her my will is law."

"But supposing she does not forgive?"

His face wore a pained look.

"Why, then, my dear, we must rest content until she relents; but come what may I will not have you wearing away your strength in that confounded shop. If she will not give her sanction to our marriage it must take place without it."

"Oh!" she cried; "but I cannot separate you from her; we can afford to wait."

"We will hope a separation will not ensue, and most certainly I will not wait longer than is absolutely necessary. Now, love, good-night, and keep a brave heart. Why," with tender rebuke; "you are actually on the verge of tears. Don't, child, it will all be well," and he kissed her passionately; "and now, once more, good-bye."

"Good-bye," she answered, softly, and he went reluctantly away.

He had fully determined to confess all that night, but when he reached home his mother and Miss Carmo were out, and did not return until long after he had gone to his room. The next day came, and as he drove to and fro he wondered how he should break the news to Mrs. Vernon, and finally with a flash came she thought,—

"I will ask Vivien to tell her; we have always been such friends that I think she will not refuse."



When he returned home that afternoon he found the two ladies sitting together in a brilliantly lit room, and it struck him with sudden force that Vivien was most superbly beautiful. As he entered she looked up with a flush on her face, and an eager light in her blue eyes.

"You are home early, Bruce?"

"Yes. Can you spare me a few moments, I have something important to tell you, Vivien. Mother, you will excuse us?"

"Certainly," with a smile, and in her heart she said, "He is going to ask her to be his wife." Perhaps Vivien nursed the same belief, for she trembled, and her face, if glad, was pale with emotion as she followed her cousin into the library. There was no light, save the flickering gleam of the fire, and Vivien, drawing an easy chair into the thickest shadows, sat down, waiting for Bruce to speak. He stood, resting his elbow on the mantelpiece, with his face turned towards her, and even in the uncertain light Vivien saw its nobility and earnestness, caught the passionate look in his large hazel eyes, and her heart beat wildly with joy.

"I am afraid," he said at last, "that I am going to surprise you. Did it ever strike you that I might fall violently and irrationally in love?"

"Why not?" she questioned, softly—"and you never do things by halves."

"You mean it was ever 'all or none' with me. I think you are right. My dear Vivien, I come to you as a suppliant." He paused, and her heart beat so loudly she thought that he must hear. Her lovely face softened, but he could not see this, she sat so far in the shadow; if he had met her eyes then he must have guessed she loved him, and was ready to promise anything he might ask.

"I want you to break the news to my mother; women always do that sort of thing better than men. May I rely on your help?"

"Oh, yes; I will do anything you wish."

"You are very good. Vivien, I am going to be married." Even then her face did not change, nor did her hope grow less. He went nearer to her and spoke quickly. "The lady I have chosen is beautiful and good, but very poor."

It was well for her that he could not see her face. Oh! the horror of it!—the sudden terrible anguish in her lovely eyes! She tried to speak, but could not, and with clenched hands she sat silently waiting him to go on.

"I thought you would be startled, but you will, I fear, be more so when you know all. I want you to intercede for me with my mother; she will be so sorely disappointed because Desirée Vernon, though a lady in manner and education, is of the people—in fact, a draper's assistant."

"And you wish me to communicate this to my aunt?" Vivien questioned, rising. Her face was still in the shadow, or he would have seen it white and distorted with passion and pain, but her voice was so hard and changed he scarcely recognised it. Before he could reply she broke out fiercely. "Do you think I will be your intercessor in this? Had the girl been a lady I should have fulfilled my promise, but I will not wound your mother by making known your folly to her. Tell her yourself of your proposed disgraceful *mésalliance*." She broke off then because her anguish choked her voice, and Bruce said coldly,—

"I was mistaken in thinking you were my friend, and I certainly did not believe you could be guilty of such an un ladylike display of temper."

She had moved towards the door, and he followed her, holding the door open for her to pass through. She paused there, and said in a low hard voice, "If you marry that girl you will be sorry all your life. You will separate yourself from your friends—do you suppose your mother will receive her, or that I will meet her on an equal footing?"

"I trust my mother will not be unreasonable, and unless you treat Miss Vernon with

the courtesy due to my wife, I must decline receiving you."

"Do you mean," passionately, "you will eject us from this house? and for her?"

"My mother is entitled to consideration, and I shall not forget my duty to her; and as you are a relative and a woman, you have a claim upon me that no man would ignore;" and he turned coldly from her. Then she ran hastily to her room and threw herself down, writhing and moaning in her pain and bitter love.

"Oh, Bruce! Bruce!" she cried, and beat her hands together with a look of despair settling down on her white face. All her bright hair fell from its bands, and covered her shoulders with its glittering gold. "And I thought he loved me," she moaned. "How could I dream he was pleading for another!" She sat up and looked from her window with wide unseeing eyes, and her face lost all its loveliness because of the hate gathering there, and the line of the lips was very cruel. In her heart was a prayer that ill might befall her innocent rival. "He would have loved me," she moaned, "if she had not come between us. She has taken him away, and I—oh! I am always and for ever alone."

While she sobbed and writhed in her agony and humiliation Bruce had gone to his mother; when he entered she rose with a bright smile. "My dear boy, I must congratulate you, for I have no doubt Vivien has answered as you wish. I am very glad."

But he interrupted. "My dear mother, it appears to me we are playing at cross-purposes. I have not asked Vivien to be my wife!"

A disappointed look came into her eyes. "I had hoped it was that," she said. He held her hands in his, and spoke gravely,—

"I think, mother, I have never given you cause for anxiety or grief."

"You have always been a good son," softly, and he continued in a low, half sorrowful tone, as though he pitted her for the blow he was about to inflict,—

"I am afraid I shall seriously displease you now; I am going to be married."

"And the bride is not Vivien? Oh! Bruce, do I know her?"

Rapidly, but firmly, he told his story, and when he had ended her face was cold and inflexible in its pride; she drew her hands from his and said,—

"You have indeed grieved me. I can only hope that you are not serious."

"Indeed, I am! Mother, you will not let pride of birth prejudice you against Miss Vernon—she is a lady?"

Very calmly she interrupted him,—

"Say rather an artful and designing girl."

He flushed hotly, but said in a conciliatory tone,—

"You will change your opinion when you have seen her. Let me bring her to you."

"I will not meet her," in tones as quiet as his own. "Bruce, you must choose between us—this girl and me. Oh! my dear, think how I have always loved you! Are you willing to cast away the care and affection of years for the passion of a few weeks? Can this girl fill your life?—can she satisfy all your higher instincts? Am I nothing to you?"

"My dear mother, gently, but firmly, 'you are indeed very much to me, but even for your sake I cannot give up Desirée. It is not only that honour would forbid me break my word, but that I love her too well to marry another woman.'"

"But, oh!" she cried, "you will forget her soon, and be glad you did not make her your wife."

"I shall never forget her, and I shall never regret giving her my name. It is useless to say more, mother."

Her face flushed hotly, but unlike Vivien she was quiet in her rage.

"Of course you will please yourself, Bruce; but I refuse to see this girl, and from the day you marry her I will hold no intercourse with you. Will you voluntarily cut yourself off

from all your friends? Do you suppose for an instant they will receive her?"

"If they will not receive her, neither shall they me. Where I go my wife will go."

"Do you not know you will injure yourself professionally?"

"I have counted the cost," coldly; "and I am very far from being afraid. I think you are exaggerating the disadvantages that may arise from my marriage."

"I have no more to say!" coldly; then with a sudden tremor in her voice, "Will you still prefer her to me?"

He did not answer, but stood looking moodily into the fire, and Mrs. Ryland, rising, went to Vivien's room. The girl was sitting by the window, and the moon had risen and was shining on the glittering golden hair, down on the white, cruel face, and unquiet eyes. When her aunt saw her she knew that Bruce had told her all, and the girl's attitude of utter despair softened her heart.

She went to her, took the little cold hands in her own, and with tears fast falling cried,—

"My poor child! my poor child!" but Vivien put her away.

"Don't, aunt, I will not cry—and your kindness would surely make me. If I cry I shall forgive him, and perhaps think less hardly of her. Oh! how I hate her! Did you ever feel you would like to kill any one—that you should laugh if you saw your enemy lying dead before you? That is how I feel! Tell me what he said."

"That he will never give her up; so you and I will have to leave this house when he brings her home. I will never meet her, and I will never forgive him!"

The cruel look in Vivien's eyes grew yet more palpable, and the line of the lips was very hard.

"They are not married yet," she said, "and, according to the old adage, 'There's many a slip twixt 'cup and lip,' and she laughed a little, low, hard laugh."

"What do you mean?"

"She may die, or play him false!"

"I am afraid she is too designing to lose him when once she has won him, and even if his feelings change towards her he will think himself in honour bound to keep his word; he is absurdly Quixotic!"

The girl rose, awfully white and quiet in manner.

"He will never marry Desirée Vernon," she said. "Oh, aunt! if she had been a lady I could have borne it better, I think, but that one of the people should win him from me! How is it we can have love we do not care for, and the love we long for with our whole hearts is never given us? When he told me this story I hated him so much I longed to strike him; but now I only love him, and all the hate has gone to her."

All night she lay tossing to and fro, wondering much what manner of girl this was that had crossed her life and spoiled it, and each hour the black hate in her heart grew blacker and stronger, and she did not strive to crush it, but nourished its growth, and tried to form some plan by which she might avenge herself on Desirée, and win for herself the love she so craved, and had so long blindly thought her own.

Poor Desirée! Small mercy would she gain if ever she fell into the hands of Vivien Carnac, for "she hated her with the hate of Hades!" and vowed to herself that she would separate Bruce from her, and turn away his love.

### CHAPTER III.

It was pain and grief to Bruce Ryland to anger his mother. She had always been most loving, most indulgent, to him from boyhood up till now. It was the first time their wills had clashed, and he felt a sudden, strange distaste for his home. His mother never spoke of Desirée, never by word or look recalled that night when he had told his story, but he knew it was ever present with her, that the memor-

of it would never wholly die out, and her manner, though kind, was constrained and unnatural.

Vivien Carnac maintained towards him an icy courtesy, never vouchsafed him a word unless he first addressed her, and then answered as shortly as civility would permit. What wonder that he daily sought Desirée, that her sweetness and gentleness won upon him more and more, and in her presence he could not be sad. He told her briefly what had passed between himself and his mother, and the girl clung to him, pale and frightened.

"Oh, Bruce!" she cried, "you know how dearly I love you, and that I am ready to sacrifice anything for your sake. Yet loving you as I do, I will give you back your promise if you feel it is too hard to keep. Had we not best part? Think, darling, I am poor and ignorant, all unfit to be your wife. Oh! how can I usurp your mother's place—how can I ever satisfy you? Oh! see, dear Bruce, here I give you back your freedom; let us say good-bye now, before my heart breaks; and you will forget me soon, and marry some girl who will not shame you with her ignorance and low birth!"

He laughed outright, and caught her in his arms.

"Don't you know I will never give you up? Oh, my love, what would my life be without you? When I remember you I am willing to endure anything so that I keep you for my own; and, Desirée, my mother must surely relent early or late!"

He kissed her again and again, while she faintly pleaded,—

"Are you quite sure you will never be sorry for this?"

"Look into my face, and see if there is any doubt there, sweetheart!"

She looked up, and saw nothing in his eyes but deepest, truest love, and perhaps she was content, for she laid her head upon his breast, and the cloud passed from her sweet face. Presently she questioned,—

"What made you love me?"

"How can I tell?"

And then he recited all the story of his love from the first day he had seen her, and wondered who and what she was, up to the present, when she was more to him than he could tell, more than wealth, or fame, or honour, and she listened with a flush on her face, and a great light in her lovely eyes.

Swiftly the days passed for them, and Desirée's life was one dream of joy. Bruce had insisted that she should leave Mr. Palmer's employ, and begged that the marriage might take place as soon as possible.

"The sooner," he said, "it is over the sooner my mother and I will be friends. She cannot hold out long."

And Desirée, though doubtful hoped it might be so. One day when he visited Gee-street, the girl met him with a flush of excitement on her face.

"Bruce, something extraordinary has happened. My mother's brother came quite unexpectedly last evening. Guess how glad she was! She has not seen him for more than twenty years."

He had rather she had no relatives save her mother, but he hid his vexation and asked,—

"How do you account for so long a separation?"

"Oh, he has been living in America, and, having amassed a fortune, thought he would return to England and end his life with us. He is unmarried; and oh! Bruce, declares his intention of making me his heiress. Do you think," wistfully, "Mrs. Ryland will be so vexed now?"

How could he tell her it was not her poverty, but her birth, that had given offence? He answered, gently,—

"We will hope so; folks say money will do any and everything."

"Come upstairs and see Uncle Tom."

And he followed her into the little room where they had first met. A jovial-looking man of fifty rose as they entered, and before

Desirée had finished the formal introduction, "Mr. Dennett—Doctor Ryland," was shaking hands and saying heartily,—

"Glad to meet you—my sister has been telling me about you. Look here, young fellow, I like your honesty, and the little girl shall not come to you empty-handed."

He was not refined in manners or appearance. A life spent in "roughing it" is not calculated to give a man the polish necessary in Mayfair society; but Bruce liked his hearty ways, and speedily forgot all but his kindness and sterling merit. He did not think the change in his *fiancée's* position would in any way affect his mother; but that evening, when they sat together, he mentioned casually that Desirée would, in all probability, inherit her uncle's fortune. Vivien ceased playing, and looked round, her face a little paler, and Mrs. Ryland said, quietly,—

"If you have told me this with a view to changing my opinion concerning your marriage, you will be disappointed to know it does not affect that in the least. Money cannot purchase birth and breeding!"

A flash of triumph shot from Vivien's eyes which Bruce was not slow to see. But with no visible change in his manner he said,—

"I have taken a villa in Auckland-road, on a three years' lease, so that there will be no necessity for you and Vivien to leave this house."

His thoughtfulness touched his mother, but she was too proud to make any sign that it did so; she only bowed, and he went on in a harder tone,—

"I shall be married at the close of ten weeks."

Vivien's hands came down with a crash upon the keys and her face was terribly white, but she said, with a short laugh,—

"Spare us the details, Bruce; we are not interested."

Desirée was very busy now. Mr. Dennett insisted that her trousseau should be on a most extensive scale; dressmakers and milliners were already boring her with continual "fittings" and "tryings on;" the bridal dress itself was to be a production of the far-famed Worth. Bruce complained that he never had a "quiet moment" with Desirée now, at which the girl laughed and said,—

"Perhaps you will one day say you have too many quiet moments with me, Bruce. Men do sometimes tire of their wives' society."

His answer was to kiss her, and affirm with warmth that she would never weary him, that he could imagine no happier lot than a lifetime spent with her.

A few days after this episode Bruce was asked by a friend living at Cheltenham to take his practice for a week, as he was compelled to go to Boulogne on important business. Unwilling to leave Desirée, but not liking to disappoint his friend, he bade her good-bye, saying lightly when he returned he should expect to find the house clear of dressmakers. Mr. Dennett had rented a villa outside the town, removing his sister and niece to it with all possible speed.

Desirée watched her lover go with a strange feeling of oppression. She was so silent and *distracted* all that first day that Mr. Dennett rallied her laughingly, asking her if she thought Bruce would not return to her.

His light words hurt her, sank into her heart, and would not be forgotten—formed themselves into a monotonous refrain.

"He will not return!"

She went to her room. There she could be quiet. She sat down before the window and looked down at the passers-by. The only sound in the room was the ticking of the French clock. That, too, took up the burden of her thought, and repeated persistently, "Will not return! will not return!"

In a fit of petulance she rose and ran downstairs. She opened her piano (music was her only accomplishment) and struck a few chords. Unconsciously she drifted into Mendelssohn's Songs without words, and when impatient

of their sadness, she tried to sing. None but the saddest songs would come to her.

Mr. Dennett joined her at last, and she pleaded,—

"Take me out, uncle Tom, I am so foolishly melancholy! Perhaps if we go out I shall forget my fears."

"Will you drive or walk?"

"Oh, walk, please! If we drive I shall be at liberty to indulge my morbid thoughts."

So they went out together, he looking very proud of his beautiful niece. They walked quickly, for it was a cold day in early February, and the rapid exercise brought a glow to Desirée's face, so that Tom Dennett thought he had never seen her so lovely.

In a by-lane they passed two ladies in a brougham, the one handsome, proud, and calm; the other, who was younger, was a most lovely blonde; and as Desirée looked at them by a sort of instinct she knew they were Mrs. Ryland and Vivien, for Bruce had so often and graphically described them that she seemed to know them even before she had met them.

She did not return home in much better spirits than she had started, because the pride in Mrs. Ryland's face left her small ground for hope of any reconciliation between mother and son.

The following morning Mr. Dennett drove his sister into the town, leaving Desirée at home. She was expecting a letter from Bruce, and could not be persuaded to leave home until the post was in.

She sat in a low chair, book in hand, pretending to read, but glancing every few moments out of the window in anticipation of the postman's coming.

After awhile she went to her own room, where she was soon followed by a maid bearing the eagerly-expected letter. How the colour flamed into her sweet face, and the light danced in her grey eyes! It was just such a letter as one would expect Bruce to write—so manly, earnest, so full of love for her, but totally devoid of pining sentiment.

With all her fears gone, and a great joy in her heart, she ran downstairs, singing for very happiness. As she reached the hall a servant was admitting a young lady, and at sight of her Desirée's face grew pale, for it was Miss Carnac. Without ceremony she advanced.

"Pardon me, but are you Miss Vernon?"

Desirée bowed. Just then she felt incapable of speech.

"I am Vivien Carnac, and I shall be glad if you will grant me a few moments' private conversation."

She spoke gravely, and her face was pale as Desirée's, who, turning, led the way in silence to a room set apart for her own use.

"We can be quiet here," she said, motioning Vivien to a chair, and sitting opposite her.

In her heart was a hope that Miss Carnac had come to make peace, and she was glad, for the sake of Bruce. She looked earnestly into the lovely face before her. It wore a grieved look, and the eyes were very sad.

After the silence had lasted some few moments, and was becoming painful, Vivien spoke in a soft voice.

"You are totally unlike the idea I had formed of you. Now that I have seen you I understand why Bruce loves you!"

"Miss Carnac," and the girl's voice trembled.

"Let me ask if you come from Mrs. Ryland?"

"No, she does not know of this visit!"

"I am sorry! I hoped that at last she was willing to receive me for his sake. Oh! believe me, the only cloud upon my happiness is the thought that I have parted mother and son. I am inexpressibly grieved to know I have caused dissension. Miss Carnac, he has told me you were always good to him; crown your kindnesses now, I beg you, by entreating Mrs. Ryland's forgiveness for us!"

Vivien's face was terribly white. "I cannot do that," she said, in a low, strained voice. "I came here as a suppliant to you; to beg that, for his sake and his mother's, you will set him free. If he marries you he will lose all he



most prizes, and his love cannot stand the test."

"You are mistaken, Miss Carnac. I am vain enough to believe Doctor Ryland will not regret making me his wife—neither do I think I shall in any way spoil his life. You apparently forget I am no longer a 'shop-girl' with a bitter emphasis; "but an heiress, and I have been told money can unlock any door!"

"You are wrong;" Vivien said, "as you will learn to your own most bitter cost, if you persist in this. Society will not receive you, at least not Arleyford society, so long as Mrs. Ryland disavances you, and she will never relent. She will hold aloof from her son even though it break her heart. You do not know her—I do."

Desirée looked agitated, her eyes were a frightened expression, and her lips were tremulous. Vivien was quick to notice these things, and quick, too, to gauge the character of her rival. She read in the girl's face every evidence of self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice, and unimpeachable honour. Leading forward, she touched Desirée's hand.

"Oh!" she cried, "I had hoped to gain my cause without betraying myself; but you are obdurate, and my love makes me very humble. Think me selfish if you will—perhaps I am so. But, oh! I loved him first, and once he loved me!"

"What do you mean?" with startled air.

"That, when first Bruce met you he was an engaged man, and I his promised wife. Did you not know this? We thought you did. Do you wonder I hated you, and my aunt will not receive you? If my words are cruel, forgive me. You would, could you guess my suffering. Why don't you speak? Miss Vernon, in mercy say something!"

Desirée rose, white as a lily, and trembling in every limb.

"Is this true?" she asked, in a moaning voice.

"Most true; you stole him from me—for pity sake give him back to me. You cannot love him so well as I do." Desirée laughed—such a pitiful mirthless laugh. Vivien had risen too, and now caught the girl's hands in her own. "We grew up together, and a year ago, only one year, he asked me to marry him. We were so happy then; I did not dream that he could change. To me it is ages instead of months since he asked me to go with him to the library. Never dreaming what he had to tell, I went willingly. Oh! Miss Vernon, the cruel words he said. He told me he loved me no longer; that he was about to marry you, and begged me to break to his mother the news of his treachery and my desertion. I cannot remember what I said. I was beside myself with agony and shame. I have striven to bear all this misery bravely; but my heart has failed me. I cannot live to see him marry you—irretrievably lost to me."

"Oh!" wailed Desirée; "why have you told me this? Do you think it is no pain to me? Do you think my love so slight that I shall not grieve to know his shame? What shall I do? Oh! Heaven! what shall I do?"

"Will you still keep your word to him? Will you break a fellow-creature's heart—wreck and ruin a whole life? If you were once away he would forget you and return to me. Has he not proved himself variable as the wind? And, oh! you will find some other who will teach you to love him better than ever you loved Bruce."

"Be quiet!" Desirée cried in low, fierce tones. "I can never forget. Don't speak to me now—let me think. Oh! Heaven! what am I to do?"

She hid her piteous face in her hands, and Vivien, sitting in the gleam of the February sunshine, watched her, with cruel and relentless eyes; watched with an almost feline enjoyment the torture she had inflicted.

Presently Desirée spoke in a hard, strained voice. "On your honour, is this true?"

She did not look up, and Vivien answered firmly, "On my honour, yes!"

The girl rose once more, and her rival was

frightened at the change in her. "Miss Carnac, you have won. Tell me what you would have me do?"

"Go away from here at once, before he can return; leave no message, no trace by which he may find you. Will you do this? Oh! all my life I shall bless you."

"Hush! yes, I will hide myself away from him. No, no, don't touch me, I cannot bear it. But, oh! when you are once more happy in his love tell him I was not utterly false as he will think me! Say that all my life I shall love him and pray for him—that for his dear sake I left him when most I loved him. Promise me this!" and she lifted her dull eyes to Vivien's face.

For a moment Miss Carnac felt a pang of remorse—only a moment—then she said,—"I promise," and strove to touch Desirée's hand, but she drew hastily away.

"Forgive me, but I cannot clasp hands with you—and now, for Heaven's sake, go!"

Without a word Vivien passed out, and a look of unholy triumph shone in her eyes and marred the beauty of her face. In her heart was a great joy; she had played her cards well, and the game was in her hand.

Like a wounded bird Desirée reached her room breathless and sick at heart; like a guilty creature she cowered down moaning, rocking herself to and fro, but never weeping. All the world was changed to her; for her the sun no longer shone, and the chirp of the birds under the eaves maddened her; the clock ticked relentlessly "will not return, will not return;" mechanically she rose and stopped it, and then cowering, shivering, hid her face once more and moaned brokenly, "Oh! Bruce, Bruce! how could you do this thing." She prayed for power to weep, but no tears came to ease her heart or allay the throbbing of her eyeballs; she felt choking, so she rose again, and opening the window leant out. The cold air fanned her hot brow, blew her hair in tangled curls about her eyes, chilled her poor trembling hands, but she was beyond all minor discomforts. A soldier and his lass turned a bend in the road—he was a tall, fine young fellow, and seemed devoted to the little woman beside him. With an inarticulate cry of blind agony and despair she closed the window and threw herself upon her bed; in her soul she said "I shall go mad with this grief. Oh, Heaven! I shall go mad," and still she could not cry.

Long hours after Mrs. Vernon found her lying awfully white and still; she knelt down beside her. "What is it, my darling? Have you had bad news?"

"Mother, mother, mother!" she moaned, and hid her face on that true heart. "How shall I bear it, how can I tell you?" Then in broken words, with faltering voice, she told the whole pitiful story, her mother listening with sorrowful face and tearful eyes. When it was ended she said,—

"My dear, are you doing right in not asking an explanation from him?"

"Yes! what is there to explain? Oh, my dear, my dear! call me foolish if you will; but, despite all my sorrow, I am proud—oh! yes, and even glad to know he loved me best. He must love me dearly to give up all for my sake—even his honour, that he always held so dear. But," wildly, "let us go away. I cannot stay here; if he were to return I should break my word to Miss Carnac. I could not refuse anything he might ask—oh! let us go away."

"My child, our going depends wholly upon your uncle, we must consider him."

Desirée sprang up.

"I will go to him, and beg him to take us from this hateful place—anywhere, anywhere, so that we do not meet him."

Like a "lapwing" she ran downstairs, and found her uncle in the conservatory.

"Take me away!" she sobbed, clinging to his arm, "take me away, dear! It is all ended between Bruce and me, and I cannot stay here."

"Why, lassie, what do you mean?" She laughed hysterically.

"I hardly know myself. I only feel we must go away; I only know I shall die if we stay here."

Then suddenly she broke into bitter tears.

"Oh, uncle! if you love me you will hide me from him. I have given my word not to see him again; but if he is in the same town—if he seeks me I shall fail. For Heaven's sake, let us go!"

He soothed her as best he could, and persuaded her to go to her own room, thinking, dear, simple soul! that there she would find rest.

Later in the day his sister told him all.

#### CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Bruce Ryland reached Arleyford he called a cab, and drove homewards. He was not expected until a later train; consequently there was no one to meet him at the station. His face wore an anxious expression, and his manner was impatient.

All through that week of absence not a line, not a word, had reached him of or from Desirée. He felt inclined to drive first to her home, but was restrained by the thought that such a course of conduct would only exasperate his mother more against the girl.

When he reached home he found Mrs. Ryland and Vivien absent, but a servant informed him they had left word they should be in before seven.

He went out, and walked hastily towards Desirée's home, and as he went many who knew him turned to look curiously at him. A strange fear crept into his heart. Had any harm befallen Desirée?

He quickened his steps. Men who had been his companions for years passed him hurriedly, and a note of regret was in their voices as they bade him good-night.

He found himself wondering vaguely why none stayed to give him welcome home, and a horrible dread came upon him that she was dead.

Out of the town now, and along the quiet road leading to her home, with the awful fear in his heart each moment growing greater. From other villas lights shone brightly, and he heard the voices of men and girls laughing, talking, singing; but when he reached that house there was no light, no sight or sound of life; only in the windows were great staring placards, "This house to be let or sold," with directions where to apply for particulars.

Mechanically he went up the steps and rang the bell, and, after what seemed to him an age of waiting, a "caretaker" opened the door, and cautiously peered up at him.

"Will you tell me where Mr. Dennett has gone?"

The woman knew him; knew, too, he was to have married Mr. Dennett's niece, so she answered in a tone of mingled commiseration and curiosity,—

"Indeed, I can't, doctor. It is said nobody knows, though many make guesses."

"Then he is not in the town?" wondering at the calmness of his voice.

"Oh, no; all of them went away on Wednesday, and I've been here since. They say Mr. Dennett paid handsome to get out o' this."

"Thanks," he answered quietly, and turned away.

This was Saturday, and she had been gone three days. He felt too stunned yet for violent grief; he only knew she was gone, and in his heart was an intolerable, dull ache.

Why had she gone? Why had she not written him? Even then he felt no doubt of her, no doubt of her loving faith. He told himself she was waiting until she knew he was home to write him of this sudden change of residence.

Slowly and heavily he retraced his steps. He pulled his hat over his eyes, and walked with downcast head. Those who met him then knew that he had learned the worst, and in pity made way for him to pass, without word or sign. All, save one, a young, im-

petuous man, indebted to him for many an act of kindness and friendship. Coming upon Bruce suddenly, he cried impulsively,—

"Ryland, is it really you?"

The other mechanically gave him his hand.

"Yes; I returned an hour ago."

"Old boy, I am very sorry for you. I see from your face you know all."

"I know nothing," in the quiet tones of a despairing man. "Tell me what you have heard!"

"Only what every one else in Arleyford has heard. Miss Vernon left here on Wednesday last with her uncle and mother, and she left no clue behind her by which one could trace her. [Folks started the theory that old Dennett was an impostor and a penniless adventurer. That proved itself a lie, as it is now known that he settled all his accounts to the utmost farthing on the previous Tuesday.]"

"I can't understand it," Bruce said, still with that dazed look in his eyes.

"I should like to know who can. Upon my word though, I am most grieved for you."

Without a word Bruce turned away, and strode homewards; like a man who has lost all hope, all semblance of joy, he entered the old familiar house, and in the hall his mother met him.

She could not speak for very pity at the sight of his pain; but she drew down his proud head and kissed his grave, stern face.

"Oh! Bruce—Bruce, if only you had believed me! It was not you she wanted, but money and rank, and now that she has the first she can afford to cast you away. There are many foolish enough to give up all for a pretty face. Does she not know this?"

He unclasped the jewelled hands from about his neck, and said, hoarsely,—

"Don't judge her yet, mother. She will write me, and remember I will hear no word against her."

She drew a little from him, not angry or scornful, but full of motherly love and sorrowing for his sorrow. Still in the depths of her heart she said,—

"Thank Heaven! he will forget her, and turn to Vivien. Then I shall never lose my son."

"Have you dined?" she asked, in a matter-of-fact voice.

"No; don't wait for me. I shall not appear at table this evening," and going to the library he shut himself in.

He tried to solve the mystery surrounding Desirée's flight, but failed. What possible explanation could there be for such an act? Had she gone of her own free will, or had others compelled her? And why had she left no word behind?

Then anger rose in his heart, as he thought how he had loved her, how he had been content to give up all for her sake; and, oh! what a return she had made. Was his love nothing to her that she could cast it lightly aside? Had all her loving looks, her tender words, been feigned?

Long he sat thinking, the shadows deepening in his eyes, and the frown ever darkening on his brow. Then he flung out his arms with an impassioned gesture.

"Oh! Heaven!" he groaned, "and I loved her!"

Loved her! Ay, did he not love her still? Would not his heart be always heavy because of this, her most cruel deed? His face flushed with outraged love and pride, and in imagination he saw himself the butt for ridicule among his companions. He had been laughed at for his Quixotic love and honour; but now he would be pitied as the dupe of an artful girl, and to a man of his nature pity was hateful, being closely allied to contempt.

In the midst of his bitter reflections the door opened, and Vivien entered, closing it noiselessly behind her. He did not turn his head, did not even by look greet her; but she went to him and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

Then lifting his heavy eyes to her face he

saw it soft with pity, and, had he not been blind, he would have read love there too.

"Bruce," she said, gently, and her eyes shone down upon him tenderly, "I have come to tell you how sorry I am for you. Oh! cousin, can I do nothing to lessen the smart?"

She was very lovely, kneeling there in the dim light, her fair face upturned, her hair shining like burnished gold. Something in her expression then reminded him strangely of Desirée—as if he needed a reminder—and his voice was less hard as he said,—

"You are very good to come to me now—we have not been good friends lately. What has made you forget the past coldness?"

She longed to answer wildly "My love for you!" but instead of this she said quietly,—

"Are we not cousins? Have I not a right to share your griefs? And, dear Bruce, I was as much to blame as you for the recent unconsciously display of pride. Can you forgive me?"

So changed, so fair, so gentle; did he wish in his heart he had chosen her?

"Do you know anything of this wretched affair, Vivien?" he asked, painfully; and she answered firmly,—

"Nothing more than all Arleyford knows. Oh! cousin, I would have done much to save you shame and woe! If I had, but known of this I might have apprised you of it—together we could have concocted some story by which to blind all our friends. My poor Bruce, can I do nothing to comfort you?"

He laughed.

"What need have I of comfort? Am I not well rid of so worthless a girl? Let us join mother."

At his words her heart beat high, and to herself she said,—

"He will love me yet!" and followed him to the drawing-room.

There she played to him, not seeming to know he did not listen, did not heed one note of all her gay music; and when at last he rose, excusing himself on the plea of weariness, she wished him a gentle, kindly good-night, and watched him as he went out with eyes full of passionate love.

Slowly, and like one bereft of all hope, he went to his room, and drawing the lamp nearer tried to read, but could not. Into his heart and brain stole the remembrance of Desirée's unselfish words and tender looks. In his soul was the dumb cry: "My love! my love! why have you left me thus?" and slowly but surely the old trust in her revived, each moment gathering in force.

The old love flamed yet higher, and, despite all calm reasoning, he could not believe her false. But what should he do? Should he sacrifice all his future, throw up his profession, abandon home, name, and country to follow after her, perhaps never more to find her? Into his mind flashed the recollection of "Frageline," probably the saddest of all Longfellow's poems; he remembered how the girl went searching through long years of weariness and pain for the lost lover; until hope died and love was fain to feed upon itself. Then when her youth, and, perhaps, her beauty, too, had flown, she found the dear long lost one, found him to lose him again, for the shadow of death was on him.

Bruce reversed the case, and pictured himself following in Desirée's steps, but never coming up with her until it was too late for love or joy—until a not-to-be-broken barrier had raised itself between them.

But he was a strong man, so the following day he took up his old duties, trod the old ways, lived the old life—but all with a difference. Into his face had stolen a certain hardness, never before seen there; into his voice a bitter ring; whilst in his heart "the abomination of desolation" reigned supreme. Desirée was gone, and with her all that made life glad and good; but he made no outcry, he did not strive to follow her. She had gone of her own free will, and he would wait until of her own will she returned.

And all the while Vivien was near him with

gentle, loving ways and words, and ever-increasing beauty. Sometimes, in fits of desperate loneliness, he resolved to ask her to share his lot, but in saner moments he was glad to remember he had restrained himself.

In those days Vivien grew very hopeful; she knew she was beautiful and clever, and she vowed to herself she would yet win Bruce. She had never yet failed to win any object on which she had set her heart, and she thought, "I shall not fail now." Poor, foolish Vivien!

The days lengthened into weeks, the weeks into months, and yet no news of Desirée, and the doctor's heart grew very heavy. He looked for a sign from her, and when no sign came grew bitter and morose, so that his friends remarked amongst themselves: "His spirit was broken because of that girl."

Oh! poor Desirée, she fared very hardly amongst them all. Arleyford, polite and vulgar, cried shame upon her; Mrs. Ryland knew no word sufficiently bitter to be applied to her. The only one who yet loved and trusted her was Bruce—the man she, to all appearances, had so wronged.

Even her old companions spoke ill of her, and refused to remember all her kindly words and deeds; so that her name so sweet, so dear to Bruce yet, was a byword and reproach—a very scorn among men.

## CHAPTER V.

TOM DENNETT took his sister and niece not only from Arleyford, but out of England. His kindly heart was grieved because of Desirée's grief; when he looked into her grey eyes and saw the shadows there, his soul was sick with pity and pain. Her face had grown very pale, but her step was still as light as before; her smile as sweet, only her laugh was rare, and in her voice was the echo of her woe. In another land, Tom Dennett thought she would forget all the turmoil and grief, would remember her lover no more; so he took her to Paris, and sought to make her happy with a ceaseless whirl of gaiety; unresistingly she went whither he chose to take her, but he noticed that the pallor never passed from her face, nor did the shadows leave her eyes. In the busy French capital she created a great sensation; men flattered her, women envied her, but amidst all the worldliness and frivolity, her heart ached for Bruce, and she leathed the adulation that was offered her. She thought, "Did these people know what I once was they would no longer flatter and covet me;" and sighed to herself: "It is only my reputed wealth that makes me popular." Artists begged to paint her, but she refused; the profession of "public beauty" was distasteful to her as it must be to any true woman; poets and would-be poets sang her praise, but amongst all these she walked serene, the queen of women, modest and beautiful. All day in her heart was the impassioned cry "My love, oh! my love!" and at night, tossing on her bed, she would call on Bruce in heart-rending accents; praying she might see him once before she came to die.

Amongst all those who flattered and admired foremost stood the Count D'Esgrandin, a young, cultivated, handsome Frenchman; and one day moved to extreme passion by her sweetness and beauty he asked the girl to marry him. With sad eyes grown sadder—for his love had made her remember Bruce Ryland's more keenly—she answered she could not be his wife; she did not love him, and without love she would never marry. After that a halo of romance surrounded her, and sorely against her will she became the fashion. It was hateful to her; the glow and glitter of fashionable life wearied her, and in a sudden frenzy she went to Tom Dennett.

"Cannot I rest anywhere?" she asked, bitterly. "Oh uncle, dear uncle, do not think me fickle and foolish, but I cannot stay here; take me away and hide me from all I know."

So once more they travelled, and finally settled in a remote German town, and here



for awhile they found peace, and Desirée was content, or as content as she could be, without Bruce.

Meanwhile, in England, Doctor Ryland was eating his heart out for love of her; not a line had reached him from her in all the weary months, not a sign that she remembered him, and at times he feared she was dead. Vivien was with him always, gentle, thoughtful, kind, and at times he was sorely tempted to ask her to marry him in the hope that thus he might forget Desirée; but no wiles of hers, no siren charms, could turn his heart to her, and he went on foolishly loving, vainly hoping (so said the world), to see his darling once again.

So the weeks and months wore by until a year had passed, and still no news of Desirée; and because Vivien was always with Bruce, always his kindly, genial companion, folks began to link their names together, so that the beauty hoped at last her love and patience were to be rewarded.

Then Bruce fell a victim to bronchitis, and Vivien shared the night-watches with his mother, until her face grew pale and her eyes heavy. Sick almost to death, but keenly alive to all around, at last he saw and recognised his cousin's love, and in his heart he pitied her, longed to repair the unconscious wrongs he had wrought for her. Lying weak and weary on his bed he watched Vivien with curious, kindly eyes, and many a time the temptation was on him to make her his wife, to put away from himself the "dreadful future, the irrevocable past." But as yet he restrained himself, knowing, as he did in his saner moments, that no woman save Desirée could satisfy his heart or make life a goodly and glad thing. So he rose from his sick bed, pale, listless, emaciated—the very ghost of his former self, for he had fought fiercely for life. It was necessary that he should leave Arleyford for a time, so a friend of his volunteered to take his practice for two months; and Bruce, with his mother and cousin, started for a more congenial climate. How sweet and loving was Vivien in those days, how subservient to his every wish! But all her love and longing could not win his heart. Yet still she went on hoping, dreaming, plotting, never doubting that in the end he would turn to her; that her love would "beget love."

All Paris rang with praise of her beauty, and Desirée was forgotten. The young nobility flocked around her, and she delighted in their homage, their flattery. Yet in all and through all she clung to Bruce.

One evening she sat alone with Mrs. Ryland.

"Aunt," she said, suddenly, "I wonder where that girl is now?"

"My dear Vivien, what does it signify to us where she is? It is enough for me to know that she has spoiled my son's life and darkened yours!" and Mrs. Ryland's face grew hard.

"But, aunt, he will forget!"

"I am afraid not! Oh! child; I do not wish to wound you, but I believe he will never love another woman as he does her!"

"I would be content with so little," Vivien said, "and in time I would teach him to love me entirely, to the utter forgetfulness of Desirée Vernon!"

But Mrs. Ryland's face wore no look of hope.

"I believe he will love her to the end!" and she was not far wrong.

In all and through all, despite grief and shame, sorrow and regret, he would love Desirée, and cling to her memory, hoping in the end to stand face to face with her, and to receive from her dear lips the explanation of all that was so hard to understand.

Sweeter than life was she to him; dearer than wealth or honour. So he waited in a madness of impatience for the day when they should come face to face, when all doubts, all clouds, should pass away, and in the fulness of perfect love they two should clasp hands again, never more to lose that hold.

One day a Frenchman spoke casually to Bruce of "a fair mademoiselle of your country,"

who had set Paris aflame with her beauty, and added that she was as cold to all wooing as she was rich and beautiful. Finally she had gone away in a hurry, folks said, to rid herself of Count D'Esgrandin's attentions. "Although he was handsome and highborn, Mademoiselle Vernon turned a deaf ear to all his entreaties."

Had the Frenchman been a man of discrimination, he would have seen a sudden light flash into his companion's hazel eyes, and a flickering of red shine through the pallor of his face. Very quietly he asked,—

"What was mademoiselle's Christian name?"

"Desirée. Do you know her?"

"Very well; but she has been from England so long that I was totally ignorant of her whereabouts. You see, though friends, our correspondence was of a most desultory kind. Do you know where mademoiselle and her friends were bound for?"

"They were going through France into Germany; that is all I know, except that they left Paris three months ago."

But for Bruce it was sufficient. To his mother's surprise and Vivien's annoyance (for she loved the gay capital) he hurried them from Paris, and travelled through the beautiful country, scarce allowing his companions time to admire the scenery or wander about the little quaint towns and villages where they halted.

His one thought was Desirée, his one hope to meet her again, and force from her an explanation of her mysterious conduct. Then, by his pleadings and reasonings, to overcome her scruples, and win her for his wife.

The very fact that she had no acknowledged suitor, that she had proved obdurate to the young Count's wooing, convinced him she loved him still; so with a new hopefulness he sought her, and Vivien wondered, when she saw the light in his eyes, heard the old, genial ring in his voice, and then blindly told herself he was learning to love her, and was glad because of him.

He was now quite restored to health, and one morning it struck him with horrible force that his two months of rest were almost gone. He said in his heart he could not, come what might, return to England until he had found Desirée.

They had now reached a small, quiet German town, and here Bruce determined to rest for a day or two. He could not tell why it was, but a strange presentiment had seized him that here he should meet Desirée, and while laughing at the conviction he yet determined not to disregard it.

Vivien said that though the town was dull, she liked it; perhaps the chief reason for her liking was that here Bruce could find no congenial companion but herself; her heart was full of him, and now she did not doubt he loved her.

"Soon," she thought, "he will tell me of his love. Oh! Bruce, my love! my love!"

And she felt no remorse for the pangs she had made Desirée endure, only joy that by her strategy she had won for herself a life of love and boundless happiness. The awakening was soon to come, and for her it would be terrible indeed!

## CHAPTER VI.

On the second evening Bruce proposed they should go to the one rather pretty theatre the town boasted. His mother declined on the score of a headache; but Vivien, although she said the "performance is sure to be execrable," willingly went with him.

The gallery and pit were very full, but the boxes were deplorably empty, only one besides their own being occupied. Later in the evening the door of the coudroit facing them opened and three people entered. Vivien, who was looking through her glasses, suddenly grew pale and shrank back, whilst Bruce started up with an exclamation partly of surprise, partly of joy, for before him stood his love, with pale,

sweet face, and winsome eyes. She had not seen him yet, and Vivien, fearful lest a meeting should ensue between her hated rival and Bruce, touched his arm.

"Take me out; I am ill!"

"Forgive me," he said, his voice hoarse with excitement, "I cannot yet leave; my whole future depends upon to-night! Vivien, don't you see she is here?"

Her face was white with rage, hate, and disappointed love, but she knew it was useless to say more, for the man was beside himself.

As yet Desirée appeared intent upon the play, but it was foolish and bald, and soon her eyes began to wander round the house. Her uncle touched her hand and whispered something which made her start and look wildly round; then, for a moment, her eyes met Bruce Ryland's.

But she gave no sign of recognition, only sat cold and quiet, turning her eyes once again to the stage. She would not see the hunger in his eyes, the awful love and longing on his face. Her heart beat madly, and she was giddy with sorrow and regret, but outwardly she was so calm that Tom Dennett and her mother thought: "She does not love him now!" and were glad for her dear sake.

How little they understood her yet! They could not realize the anguish she was suffering; they asked would she like to leave, and she answered quickly,—

"No."

He might be lost to her, but he had loved her once, and to be near him again was more than she had dared to hope; but Vivien, why were they alone together? Was she his wife? For a moment her head sank, and the watcher in the opposite box longed to spring to her and clasp her to his heart. He saw a sudden unutterable agony come upon her fair face, and he knew that in some way he had brought it there; in his soul was the jubilant cry,—

"She loves me still!"

And the play went on; it was altogether very dreary, and not even the beauty of the actress who took the rôle of heroine, or her magnificent voice could satisfy the audience, or for a moment distract Desirée's thoughts from Bruce.

Once she glanced furtively towards him, to meet in his eyes a mute entreaty, and something, too, like reproach for her to dare look into them again.

Vivien who had recovered calmness, although her face was deadly white, never removed her eyes from her rival; an awful fear was in her heart that Bruce and she would meet and an explanation would ensue, which would expose her treachery and blight all her hopes of happiness and love; who could tell, as she sat so quiet, so cold, how her heart was racked with fear, what deadly torture she was enduring?

Suddenly Bruce looked at her—a moment she quailed before the intense questioning in his eyes and looked away; a suspicion rose in his mind that Miss Carnac was not wholly ignorant of the cause of Desirée's flight from Arleyford.

He bent down. "Vivien, tell me truly, do you know why Miss Vernon ran away from us?"

Her lips were white as her face, but she answered firmly, "I do not. Why do you ask?"

"Forgive me, Vivien, but for a moment I thought you did; your sudden pallor, your plea of illness, and a certain expression in your eyes almost convinced me of it."

"How can you be so unjust!" determined like the Spartan boy to hold out to the death.

Desirée from behind her fan saw his attitude, the bowed head, and, of course, misconstrued these into signs of love, and lover's attention. "Oh!" she thought, in her wrung heart, "he should spare me this pain."

Here the curtain was drawn up and the third act began, if possible more bald than the preceding two. Mr. Dennett was utterly weary of it all, and expressed his opinion that if the burlesque was no better they had suffered a "dead robbery."

Suddenly there rose a wild cry of "Fire

fire!" and one of the wings burst into fierce flame. Who can tell the panic that ensued? Men and women and little children rose as with one accord, and struggling, screaming, fighting, strove to make their way to the doors. The place was badly and inconveniently built, the means of exit few and narrow, and at each a fearful crush ensued. In vain the manager cried to the frightened people to go out quietly and orderly; he reiterated that the fire had not yet got a serious hold; there was time for all to escape. They would not listen; they heard the hissing of the flames, the crackling of the wood as it fell in charred masses, and they became mad with horror. Mr. Dennett caught his sister's arm, and holding Desirée's hand, bade them cling to him and keep calm. Mrs. Vernon was half fainting; but Desirée, although white to the lips, showed no sign of fear. Vivien had risen, and with both hands clasping Bruce's arm cried wildly to him to take her out! "Oh! if we had gone before! Save me, save me, Bruce! I dare not die."

"Hush!" he said, hoarsely, for he thought of Desirée. On the verge of one of the struggling, screaming crowds he saw the little party—just a moment, then they were lost to him. He threw one arm about Vivien and made for a little side-door which until now appeared to have escaped attention, and hurried her towards it; half-way there he turned to look for Desirée—she was standing outside the crowd in an attitude of utter resignation; somehow she had been parted from her friends, and she felt it vain to struggle any more. Bruce dragged his unwilling, frightened cousin back, and in a moment they stood beside the girl.

"Desirée!" the young man cried, and at his voice she turned—a flash spread over throat and face—and a great light flashed into her eyes. "The north door is not yet blocked—come."

"You cannot save us both—save her," with a glance at Vivien, who was now almost unconscious and a heavy burden.

"Come," he repeated, sternly, "I will not leave you here. Good Heaven! don't you know it is death?"

But his words concerning the north door had been overheard, and now many rushed towards it frantically, with a look of despair, Bruce said it. "Why did you delay—I am afraid we are lost now."

Then she forgot everything, save that he might share what seemed her inevitable doom. "Oh! go," she passionately entreated; "save yourself and her—leave me!"

He caught her wrist and held it like a vice, and with set face, compressed lips, and fierce eyes, struggled on; but laden as he was he could make no headway.

Oh! the terrible groans and wild wailings. Men and women fell and others passed ruthlessly over their bodies, careless of all but their own lives; children cried piercingly "Mother, mother!" Desirée closed her eyes to shut out the horrible scene, and prayed that the fearful sound might cease. A strong, quiet-looking young German spoke to her. "Will you trust me to get you out, your companion is powerless, burdened as he is;" for Vivien had fainted.

"Let me go," pleaded Desirée, and perhaps Bruce knew it was useless to hold her longer; he only said, in a hoarse whisper, "If it must be so—Good-bye." "Good-bye," she answered, a little break in her voice, and gave her hand to the German. He had a good face, and it inspired her with confidence. She said softly, "You are very good to me, but I am afraid we shall never get out alive. Will you not have a better chance by yourself?"

"I will not leave you," he answered, gravely, but she did not seem to hear. She was looking for Bruce, but the crowd had carried him on, and she could see him no more. On and on Bruce and his cousin were borne, and at last he felt the cool night-air upon his face, and knew they had reached the door. A moment, and they were in the street, where a scene scarcely less horrible than that enacted in the theatre met Bruce Ryland's eyes. The fire had roused all the inhabitants, and they had rushed to the spot, minus hats or cloaks, careless

of all save their dear ones. Many were rushing wildly to and fro, calling on their relatives; and when no answer came, some were for forcing a way into the burning building. The first to greet Bruce was Mrs. Ryland, who had hastened down with a great horror in her heart. "Oh! my son, my son!" breaking into passionate, joyful sobs; he hardly seemed to hear. "Mother," he said, quickly, "take care of Vivien, she is reviving now—I must go back!"

"Oh, Bruce, stay with us; do not risk your life again," clinging to him, while Vivien, now perfectly conscious, implored, "Do not go—oh! Bruce!"

"She is there!" he answered, and hastened away.

"Who is there?" Mrs. Ryland asked.

"That girl! Oh Heaven! aunt, aunt, I have lost him!"

Bruce was deaf to their entreaties; he only knew he had last seen Desirée in the burning theatre; he only felt it might yet be given him to rescue her. He reached the narrow exit, met the struggling mass of humanity, happily for the greater part uninjured, strove to force his way through, but failed; then he felt a hand upon his arm, and turning saw Mr. Dennett.

"Have you seen my little girl, Doctor?"

"Yes, she is in there. Good Heavens! can nothing be done? Let me go, man, I may yet be able to save her."

"It is madness to go back," mournfully.

"Where is your wife?"

"My wife! you mean my cousin."

"I thought you were married;" then despairingly, "I dare not go back to my sister; I have compelled her to return to the hotel—How can I tell her Desirée is dead?"

"She is not dead," the younger man cried, as though to reassure his own heart of the fact, and accompanied by Tom Dennett, he pressed forward. A cry of passionate joy broke from him, as he suddenly came face to face with the young German, bearing Desirée in his arms.

"God bless you!" cried Mr. Dennett; but Bruce had no word to say. An awful, inarticulate sound broke from him, as all his manhood forgotten, trembling like a child he caught Desirée to him, unable to utter a word of thanks to her preserver, who said very quietly, "The young lady behaved nobly, but something, I cannot tell what, in the excitement I did not notice, struck her head and she fainted."

Mr. Dennett seized his hands, and thanked him with the passionate tears in his eyes, but the young fellow stopped him with scant courtesy.

"I only did what any other man would do," simply, "and now let me go. I am awfully done up."

Giving him the name of their hotel, and extorting a promise from him to call upon them the following morning, Mr. Dennett turned to Bruce, who asked shortly, "Which way?"

Neither man was capable of much speech, so the elder led the way without a word. The journey was but a short one, and presently they entered the hotel, which was all astir with excitement. Mrs. Vernon met them in the hall, terribly white and agitated; when she saw Desirée lying so silent, so motionless in Bruce's arms, she feared the worst, and with a wild shriek ran towards him. "She is not dead," he said, quietly, "her heart beats strongly beneath my hand," and entering a room he placed the girl upon a couch and asked for restoratives. To Mrs. Vernon and her brother it did not seem strange that he should be with them; they asked no questions, and his mere presence seemed to inspire them with confidence. It was only when Desirée showed signs of returning consciousness that her mother begged he would go away. "If she sees you now," she said, "the surprise and excitement will be ill for her!"

"May I come to-morrow?" he pleaded, with

his eyes full of love, resting on that dear, fair face.

"As you please, although I think it best she should never see you again."

"Some explanation is owing me," he answered, coldly, "and my whole life and hers shall not be spoiled for lack of one," and he went out quietly.

Went out quietly; but, oh! what a tumult was in his heart! what a fever of love, longing and impatience!

"To-morrow," he thought, "I will know all!"

When he reached his lodgings Vivien had gone to her room, having ascertained from the landlord that her cousin was quite safe; but Mrs. Ryland, despite the man's reiterated assurance that he had seen the doctor with an elderly gentleman, and carrying a young lady towards the Hotel Goslar, could not be persuaded to lie down until she had once more seen her son, and heard from his own lips he was unhurt.

## CHAPTER VII.

As early the following morning as etiquette would allow Bruce presented himself at the Hotel Goslar, and requested permission to see Desirée. After a momentary hesitation Mrs. Vernon bade him follow her, and together they went upstairs; pausing outside a door she said, "You will find her alone," and left him there. A sudden tremor seized him when he opened the door and found himself face to face with his long-lost love; she was lying on a couch, her head supported by pillows, and her hands loosely clasped. She was very pale, and when she saw who her visitor was her face grew yet paler, and her eyes wore a frightened look. She neither attempted to rise, nor held a welcoming hand to him, and he advanced to her.

"I trust the injury you received last night is not a serious one?"

"Oh, no, Doctor Ryland, it has only made me feel weak and listless;" her lips were tremulous, but her voice was calm. "I must thank you for your extreme goodness to me last night; my uncle has told me that I owe my life in a great measure to you; I scarcely remember anything that occurred after"—she was about to say "after we were divided," but stopped suddenly; and Bruce answered coldly and quietly, "Mr. Dennett was mistaken; I was not instrumental in rescuing you. Your life, humanly speaking, was saved by the young German who took you from me. Miss Vernon, will you answer me a few questions truthfully." His stern eyes looked into hers, and he was so close to her that she could have touched him; she averted her face, and he saw a slight tinge of colour spread from her throat to her cheek; he noticed, too, that her hands trembled violently.

"I will not trespass long upon your considerate kindness," he went on, choosing to assume she would answer all that he chose to ask.

"Will you tell me why you left Arleyford so suddenly and mysteriously?"

"Do not ask—I have promised to be silent; and why do you wish to know this now? Oh! surely it would have been better not to have come to me. If Mrs. Ryland knew of this interview she would be indignant, and perhaps accuse me of calling you to me."

"My mother would scarcely be so unjust!" "I did not speak of your mother, but of your wife. Is she not your wife?" almost piteously.

"If you mean Vivien Carnac, she is not. What leads you to suppose I am married," moodily; "your uncle has apparently fallen into the same error."

"Do you mean," Desirée said, wondering meanwhile at her own calmness, "that you are not going to marry your cousin—that you never asked her to be your wife?"

"That is precisely what I do mean," quietly, but with a flash on his face; "although since you left me her beauty and goodness have



sometimes tempted me to do so. But I swear, *Desirée*, I have loved you first and last!"

"Oh!" she broke in reproachfully, "at least be true in this—do not try to deceive me; before you knew me you loved Vivien Carnac!"

"Upon my life I did not, and you are fully aware of that. I fail to see how you can meet reproach with reproach; no man ever loved more truly than I loved you—ay, and love you still, despite all the wrong I have suffered at your hands."

"Tell me," she said, leaning towards him, "did no word of love ever pass between you and your cousin?—I mean before you knew me—on your honour, Bruce?" forgetting all coldness, all ceremony.

"Upon my honour no; and if foolish jealousy prompted your flight, I can only say I was mistaken in the estimate I formed of your character."

She rose, and the lovely colour flushed suddenly over face and brow; all her suppressed love shone in the depth of her grey eyes, and her voice was low and full of tears, as she said,—

"If in my desire always to consider your good first, I have brought you only trouble and shame, if my love has seemed false and fleeting and all unworthy you, forgive me. For your sake and love's, I left you when I loved you best; for your sake I suffered all this agony of separation, and the knowledge that you would doubt, despise, and perhaps forget me. Do you think the past year has been sweet or good to me? For my love and my sorrow's sake, forgive me!"

His face was ghastly white, but though the yearning to take her to him filled his whole heart, he said, sternly,—

"You are speaking in enigmas; will you not explain yourself clearly?"

Her grey eyes fell before his, but she asked,—

"If, after to-day we never meet, will you marry her?"

Impatiently he answered, "Why do you continually harp on that one string? No, if I do not marry you, no other woman shall be my wife. Are you satisfied? What more shall I say to convince you? With all my soul I love you, and am willing to forget the past if you will let all be as once it was to have been. But I were less than man if I did not insist upon some explanation of your seemingly heartless conduct."

She sat down, a perplexed look on her face, and when she spoke her voice had in it nothing but tender pity for the unhappy woman whose treachery she must disclose, if ever she and Bruce would be happy any more.

"When you had left Arleyford two days," she said, "Miss Carnac came to me."

Bruce started, but *Desirée* did not seem to notice him. She set looking with far-away eyes out of the window into the quiet street below. She went on in low, distinct tones,—

"I was glad to meet her, thinking she had come with some message of forgiveness and friendship from Mrs. Ryland (it was always a bitter grief to me that I had parted you). But Miss Carnac's errand was far from this. She implored me, by my love for you, to give you back your freedom; she told me that marriage with me for you meant social ruin; but I was vain enough to think otherwise, and to believe your love would never lessen for me."

Bruce drew a little nearer, and bent towards her.

"Then she told me a story that crushed out all my hopes, my joy—that almost broke my heart. She said that long before you knew me you loved her, that she had been your promised wife!"

"It is false!" he broke in hurriedly, and *Desirée*'s sweet face flashed into sudden joy; but when he would have touched her she shrank back from him, and once more took up her story.

"She urged upon me that if I went away, leaving no message for you, never again holding any communication with you, in time you would return to your old love and allegiance,

She showed me very forcibly that Mrs. Ryland hated me, and would never forgive me because in her eyes I had wrought your ruin. Oh, Bruce! Bruce! forgive me. I was foolish; but I loved you even though I doubted you. In that hour of supreme agony I yet was glad and proud to think you had loved me best; but I thought—"

What *Desirée* thought has never been known, because the young man beside her, suddenly caught her in his arms, and rained passionate kisses on her face; and she, poor foolish child, had no word to say, only clung to him, half-sobbing; with eyes star-bright shining through their tears.

"You will not leave me again," he said, triumphantly, and she found voice to say,—

"Never, unless you bid me go. But Bruce, oh! my dear, my dear, can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you! Look, dear heart, do I wear a very formidable aspect? *Desirée*, if you had but spoken, all this year of sorrow had never been known."

"Don't spoil the present with regrets for the past," she whispered, lifting shining eyes to his; and Bruce, because we are so happy, be merciful to Miss Carnac. Remember it was her love for you that prompted her to act as she did."

His face grew stern. "I shall, I trust, behave towards her with the courtesy due to a woman, however she may have sinned. More I cannot and will not promise, even to you," and she knew by the resolute look in his eyes that he would not go from his word.

He was very unwilling to leave *Desirée*, saying, laughingly, he feared she might disappear a second time; and when Mrs. Vernon went in to them she found Bruce with his arm about her child, his honest good-looking face bright with his happiness and love. He rose as she entered, and took her hand.

"Dear Mrs. Vernon," half laughing, "I feel myself a most cruelly treated man. You have all been blaming and hating me without a cause; but *Desirée* is prepared to exonerate me of all blame. Are you as willing to receive me as your son, as she is to defend me?"

Seeing *Desirée*'s happy face, and having always liked Bruce, Mrs. Vernon was not much averse to his suit; but she asked,—

"What will Mrs. Ryland say?"

"I trust she will be induced to change her opinion. She will be compelled now to recognise the fact that honour and truth do not always accompany high birth and good breeding;" and then, simply and tersely, he told her the whole story of Vivien's sin, and Mrs. Vernon joined with him in his bitter condemnation of the girl; but *Desirée* said, so fitly,—

"I am so happy I can afford to forgive her, and you, Bruce," smiling now, "should be so flattered by her preference that you should not find it hard to forgive, and to pity her."

"If I alone had been concerned it would not have been hard; but when I remember all she has made you suffer, I feel bitter against her, darling," and here, as he turned eagerly to the girl, Mrs. Vernon discreetly left the room.

When Bruce returned to his lodgings he found Mrs. Ryland and Vivien together, the former reading, the latter looking from the window with flushed face and terrified eyes. His mother looked up,—

"Where have you been Bruce?" she asked. "To the Hotel Goslar! I have had an interview with Miss Vernon," glancing contemptuously at his cousin, "and she has explained the cause of her flight to my satisfaction, although I confess, at the same time, I was horribly disgusted."

"With Miss Vernon?" questioned his mother, hoping that now indeed his infatuation for that girl was ended; but his answer was so opposite to what she expected that she could only look at him in silence. Vivien cowered lower in her chair, and shielded her face with her hands. She knew all was discovered, that for her the end had come, and her heart felt like to break with passionate love and regret

that she had failed to win him to herself. Bruce turned to his mother. "Will you leave us, dear, I have something to say to Vivien?"

The girl started up,—

"Oh! aunt, aunt, do not go. I am afraid."

Mrs. Ryland, astonished beyond measure, stood looking from one to the other. Bruce spoke again, this time to his cousin.

"I wish to spare you what of pain and shame is possible. You had best consent to see me alone."

Mrs. Ryland moved towards the door, but Vivien followed, and clung to her.

"If I must listen," she cried, "stay with me. Soon or late you will know—why not now?"

"As you will," Bruce said, coldly. "If you choose to make your dishonourable conduct public property by all means do so. For your sake, and because she wished it, I would have screened you, so far as my scorn for you would permit; but you have decided. Mother, Miss Vernon left Arleyford at Vivien's instigation, and because of a most false story concocted by her."

Vivien suddenly faced him defiantly a moment, then flashed upon her aunt.

"It is true," she cried, fiercely; "I did speak falsely, and she believed me. I told her that before Bruce met her he had loved me, and promised to marry me. I represented to her that marriage with her for him would mean social ruin; that you, aunt, would never forgive him—never receive her. I showed her he was mine by former vows; that if she were once away he would turn to me, remember the old love, and in the end I should be his wife."

Her eyes fell now, and she went on quickly and almost incoherently, as if suddenly the true sense of her position, the shame and shadow of her sin, at last had become palpable to her,—

"I have not been successful—and the fallen should receive pity. I have sinned, but I did it all because I loved him, and my only sorrow is I have sinned in vain," lifting defiant eyes once more, and seeing on her aunt's proud face pity, pain, and scorn strangely mingled. Then her heart melted within her, for Mrs. Ryland had been almost mother to her ever since her own mother died. "Oh, aunt, dear aunt!" she wailed, "you will not love me less. Forgive me, forgive me! I am so miserable—and I loved him!"

"How could you do this thing!" questioned the elder lady. "Oh, child, child! could you not remember that life without honour is nothing worth?"

"This is most painful to everyone," Bruce said; and, turning, left the two women together.

Then Mrs. Ryland said, in low, sorrowful tones,—

"The pain you have inflicted upon me, Vivien, is too great for me to tell; the shame you have brought upon yourself can never die from your memory or from mine. Do you not know how proud I have always been of our honour; how I have made it my boast that no Carnac (Mrs. Ryland had been Miss Carnac) ever stooped to a mean or cruel deed!"

"Aunt, oh, my dear aunt, I loved him!"

"Nothing can palliate your crime, not even your love—it rather aggravates it, for love should be unselfish, and an incitement to a nobler life. You have only succeeded in making Bruce more wholly Miss Vernon's lover than before, and have shown me that a 'Daughter of the People' can rise to heights impossible to one of my own race. Oh, Vivien, Vivien—and I have always loved you so well!"

The proud, beautiful elder woman broke into sobs then.

"You have been dear to me as my own child, and even now I cannot love you less, though between us confidence and esteem are for ever at an end."

Vivien only rocked herself to and fro, moaning that she could not bear her pain; that she would leave them, go away, and begin a new life; and at sight of her woe Mrs.

Ryland rose, and, going to the girl, bent down and kissed the golden hair.

"Oh, child, child!" she murmured, sadly; and Vivien looked up to meet the pity and regretful love in the dark eyes, and lost all self-control.

She sprang up and threw her arms about her aunt.

"I am sorry I have hurt you," she sobbed, "and that is my greatest grief."

For a moment they stood locked each in the other's arms; then the girl freed herself, and spoke quietly.

"I must go away—at least until they are married. I knew last night this must come, and I lay thinking what I should do. The Davenport's are in Paris, and will be glad to have me. I shall telegraph to-day, and leave here to-morrow."

"Perhaps"—sorrowfully—"it will be best, at least for the present, that we should live apart."

The following day Vivien looked into her aunt's room.

"I am going now," she said, and the other rose, took her hands, and kissed her.

"Good-bye," she said, brokenly, "and Heaven bless you!"

"Good-bye!" sobbing; "and say good-bye to Bruce for me," and then she passed away from them for ever.

When she had been gone an hour Mrs. Ryland went to her son.

"Bruce," she said, "if I have been hard and cruel to you and Miss Vernon I am sorry. Will you take me to her? I should know my son's wife."

Without a word he rose, and they went out together. As they entered Mrs. Vernon's sitting-room that lady rose quietly and gracefully to meet them, impressing Mrs. Ryland very favourably.

"I will ring for Désirée," she said, and soon the girl entered, flushed, but calm in manner. Mrs. Ryland took her hand, looked into her clear eyes, and then said, softly,—

"My dear, we must be friends now," and kissed her.

In after days, when Vivien had made a brilliant, loveless match, Mrs. Ryland could find it in her heart to say, "Thank Heaven, Bruce married Désirée," and ever her love deepened for the girl she had once despised as a "Daughter of the People."

[THE END.]

## FACETIÆ.

GUARD to old lady who has been causing him a great deal of unnecessary trouble: "Well, mum, I just wish you was an elephant, and then you'd always have your trunk right under your eyes."

A NEWLY-MARRIED lady was telling another how nicely her husband could write.—"Oh! you should just see some of his love-letters."—"Yes, I know," was the freezing reply; "I've got ever so many of 'em in my desk."

"I NOTICE," said one lady to another, "that at our social gatherings you are always the last one to leave." "I know it," was the reply; "I have an object in view." "What is it?" "I want to prevent the rest of you from slandering me." "Oh, you mean thing! You never like to see our friends enjoy themselves!"

A WELL-KNOWN actor had a horror of street-music. On one occasion the "waits" played before his house at midnight, and waited on him next morning. They were ushered into his room.—"Well," said the actor, "what do you want?"—"We played before your house last night," said the musicians.—"I heard you," was his reply.—"We are come for our little gratuity," said the melodious invaders.—"Why, bless me," said the sufferer, "I thought you came to apologise."

A HAIRDRESSER at the East-end has this startling announcement in his shop: "Ladies shortcomings made up and arranged."

An inveterate bachelor, being asked by a sentimental miss why he did not secure some fond, one's company in the voyage of the ocean of life, replied, "I would, if I were sure an ocean would be Pacific."

"No, I can't stay," replied a gentleman who was invited to stay all night at the house of a friend. "Before morning my wife would be out with a lantern, like Diogenes, hunting for an honest man."

THE seasons drive Time's circling car,  
And this the unwelcome fact explains.  
Why times so dull and sluggish are,  
For Winter holdeth back the rains.

MISTRESS (to new cook): "Now, Sarah, if you are strictly honest and economical, I will give you something extra per month." New Cook: "Thank you, ma'am; I will think over it, and let you know in the evening."

AN INEXISTIBLE PUN.—When Jones went to look for rooms, he was shown about the premises by a handsome piece of muslin—young, bright, and fair—as ever gladdened the eye of a bachelor.—"What suite do you think you should prefer, sir?" she asked.—Jones said he couldn't help it if he was to die for it, and he replied in his most killing manner: "Sweet eighteen. From what she said," added Jones, "I somehow got the impression that 'sweet eighteen' was already engaged."

ROAST GOOSE.—There is a capital joke, at an English gentleman's expense, by a Highland lassie, and which shows that the Highland lassies can pun a bit. An English gentleman recently arrived at an hotel recently in the north of Scotland late in the afternoon, and asked the waiters to get him something to eat. "What will you have, sir?" "Roast goose and peas, if you have it." "Goose! at this time of day! Then you must gang on the spit yourself, sir," said the smiling attendant, as she left the apartment.

NOT THE DOG, BUT HIS BANK.—A lady was travelling in a stage-coach with a troublesome, barking dog in her lap. A gentleman, a fellow-passenger, complained of the annoyance. "Dear me, sir!" exclaimed the lady, with an air of astonishment, "I wonder you complain of my dog—everybody admires it. It is a real Peruvian." "I don't complain of your Peruvian dog, madam," replied he, "but I wish he would give us less of his Peruvian bark."

LITTLE Mary, who is very much interested in studying "the laws of health" since school began, had been asking Mr. Rattler all sorts of questions about diseases and their remedies. "Now, papa," she continued, "if you neglect a bad cold you lay a foundation for consumption, don't you?" "Yes," answered her father. "And consumptives are thin and pale, aren't they?" "Yes." "What other signs are there—well, in quick consumption, papa?" queried the child. "Five minutes for refreshment," posted in a railway station," responded Rattler. Here the examination abruptly closed.

HER LITTLE BROTHER.—Little Tommy was entertaining one of his sister's admirers until she appeared. "Don't you come to see my sister?" he inquired. "Yes, Tommy, that's what I come for." "You like her immensely, don't you?" "Of course, I admire her very much. Don't you think she's nice?" "Well, I have to, 'cause she's my sister; but she thumps me pretty hard sometimes. But let's see you open your mouth once. Now shut it tight till I count ten. There—I knowed you could do it!" "Why, Tommy, who said I couldn't?" "Oh, nobody but sister!" "What did she say?" "Well, she said you hadn't sense enough to keep your mouth shut, and I bet her two big apples you had; and you have, haven't you? And you'll make her stamp up the apples, won't you?" The young man did not wait to see whether she would "stamp up" or not.

THE man who tore his coat thinks *repairs* are increasing.

A FRANKLIN barber's signboard reads thus: "To-morrow the public will be shaved gratuitously." Of course it is always to-morrow.

An editor has been elected town constable, and now is able to arrest the attention of his readers.

What does the letter *b* do for boys as they advance in years? As they grow older, it makes them bolder.

GETTING ACCUSTOMED TO IT.—"Aunt, why do you sit out the long sermons of that minister?" said the niece. "My dear," replied the aunt, "they accustom me to eternity."

HIS TRADE MARK.—An honest dealer advertises that his "trade mark" is that a boy five years old can buy of him as cheap as a man of mature age.

LUCKY FOR HIM.—A country editor consoled a man who complained that justice had not been done him by the remark that it was "very lucky for him."

A CURSE epitaph in a country churchyard reads thus:—

"Here lies old Satter,  
And that's what's the matter."

PRIDES tells us that where he came from there was a boy so sharp that when his mother went to flog him with a cane he always "cut it."

A GENTLEMAN having his hair cut, and being annoyed with the operator's stories, in the middle of each he said, "Cut it short." At last the barber, in a rage, exclaimed, "It cannot be cut shorter, for every hair on your head is off."

"THE great trouble with Mr. J.," said Mrs. J. to a neighbour, "is that he so often changes his mind." "Yes," sweetly responded the neighbour, "and every time he changes it he seems to get a poorer one."

DOVE AND SERPENT.—A coloured preacher, commenting on the passage, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves," said that the mixture should be made in the proportion of a pound of dove to an ounce of serpent.

FOND OF THE STREAM.—"Well, my boy," said a gentleman to an angler whom he observed fishing away at a favourite stream, "that must be a fine stream for trout?" "Faith, and sure it must be that same, for I have been standing here this three hours, and not one of 'em will stir out of it."

A SCENE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS.—The following curious scene is described by the present Lord Albemarle, who was witness to it. A debate on the Clergy Reserves in the Canada Bill, in April, 1853, was the occasion. The late Lord Derby made remarks, from which Bishop Wulferforde expressed his dissent by shaking his head and smiling. The noble earl took exception at the gesture. The bishop admitted the smile, but denied all intention of thereby imputing anything offensive. Lord Derby: "I accept the explanation offered by the right reverend prelate; but when he says that it is impossible for him to say anything offensive because he has a smiling face, he will forgive me if I quote, without intending in the least to apply the words to him: 'A man may smile and smile, and be a villain.'" Lord Clarendon (in a voice of thunder): "Oh! oh! oh!" Lord Derby: "What noble peer is it whose nerves are so delicate as to be wounded by a hackneyed quotation?" Lord Clarendon: "I am that peer, and protest against any noble lord applying, even in the language of poetry, the epithet of villain to any member of the House." Peacemakers rose on both sides of the House. The reporters had left the gallery previous to a division. Lord Clarendon, who was greatly excited, drunk off a glass of water. Lord Derby, at the same time, filled another bumper of water, and called out, across the table: "Your good health, Clarendon!" And so the affair ended.



## SOCIETY.

It is not definitely settled, we believe, says *Society*, where the Queen will spend Easter, whether at Baden, or some other Continental resort; but Her Majesty will certainly go on the Continent for some time during the spring. The Royal yacht *Osborne* is at present being refitted at Portsmouth, for the express purpose of conveying the Royal party.

It is quite certain, from the experiences of the New Year's Day, just over, that in Paris flowers have really taken the place of bouquets as friendly gifts. There can be no more acceptable offering, except, perhaps, to the younger members of the family. Flower vendors have been doing a roaring trade; so, too, have the postal bureaux. It would be interesting to know what the flowers think of it; and could we mortals really understand the true language of flowers, what romances, what secrets, and what tragedies would we not learn! Flora is the goddess of the hour in Paris.

A nest of Miss Mary Anderson is being executed by Count Gleichen. It is destined, on completion, for the Princess of Wales, who is greatly impressed with the charming American actress.

CONSIDERABLE regret is felt in Brighton at the fact that the fancy dress ball in aid of the charities of the town will not be given this season. For some years past General Shute and his friends have worked hard to make this annual event a success, but balls of this character are now so frequent that they hesitate about venturing any further. It used to be a very enjoyable gathering, the charitable object of which lent a zest to its enjoyment, and it is to be hoped that it will not altogether lapse.

ON New Year's Day a grand reception was given at Government House, Portsmouth, by Prince and Princess Edward of Saxe-Weimar, and was attended largely. All officers of the garrison and ships in harbour were in full uniform, and the ladies' dresses were very handsome. Princess Edward of Saxe-Weimar wore a handsome dark brocade and satin dress, with diamond ornaments, a spray of real flowers on one shoulder, and carried a large bouquet of exotics. Lady Owen wore black satin, with the front of jetted lace, and cascade down one side of satin loops and jet balls. Miss Hornby was in white. White was very general among the younger ladies. One in particular was gracefully arranged with small flowers on the front of alternate lace and tulle, waterfall back of tulle, and silk bodice with lace sleeves, and a shower of single daisies scattered all over.

ON Wednesday, January 9, at St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, was celebrated the marriage of Major George Chalmer (92nd Gordon Highlanders) with Miss Janet Baird, only daughter of the late Mr. John Baird, of Urie, Stonehaven, N.B. The bride's bodice and long loose square train were of white brocade velvet; the skirt being of white satin, trimmed with Carrickmacross lace (the gift of her sister-in-law, the Hon. Mrs. Baird). The drapery of satin, edged with thick chenille fringe, was looped up with ostrich feathers and white velvet ribbon. Over a small wreath of real orange blossoms she wore a tulle veil, fastened to the hair by a diamond swallow brooch, the bridegroom's gift, and numerous diamond pins; her jewels included a diamond necklace, a present from her brother. The three little bridesmaids were dressed in white plush coats, trimmed with white fur, confined at the waist by a white satin band, over dresses of white Surah, and white plush "granny" bonnets, trimmed with white satin ribbon. The Hon. Mrs. Baird, sister-in-law of the bride, wore grey broadened velvet (in two shades) and satin, trimmed with marabout to correspond with the darker shade, and bonnet of grey plush, with feathers to match.

## STATISTICS.

ENGLISH WHEAT IMPORTS are steadily increasing. There is a regular increase in the population, of course, and as no increased production occurs at home, increased imports are necessary. The increase, however, is far in excess of the increase of population. Thus from 1863 to 1867 the annual average import of breadstuffs was 29,725,366 cwt., while from 1868 to 1873 it was 40,983,482 cwt. From 1873 to 1877 the mean was no less than 53,543,088 cwt., while from 1879 to 1882 the quantity was 67,985,642 cwt. More recently we have been importing at the rate of a million hundredweight of wheat and a quarter of a million hundredweight of flour every week.

BIRTHS, DEATHS, AND MARRIAGES IN LONDON.—It appears that in the course of the fifty-two weeks that ended on Saturday December 29, there were 133,656 births registered in London, the population in 1883 being estimated at 3,955,814. In 1882 the births reached 133,200, so that the actual increase has been only 456, and if due allowance be made for increased population the birth-rate will show a slight decline—namely, from 34.3 to 33.9. The birth-rate for 1883 is the lowest one that has been given since 1860, when it was taken at 33.6. There were also 80,578 deaths recorded in London in 1883, against 82,905 in 1882. The death-rate thus falls from 21.4 to 20.4, the lowest one yet given for the metropolis.

## GEMS.

To have his tongue cut out, and to be seated deaf and dumb in a corner, were preferable to his condition who cannot govern his tongue.

MANY speak the truth when they say that they despise riches and preferment, but they mean the riches and preferments possessed by other men.

NOBODY is satisfied in this world. If a legacy is left to a man, he regrets that it is no larger. If he finds a sum of money, he searches the same lucky spot for more.

NOR every woman can dress well with the most reckless expenditure; but a clever woman can dress well with intelligent economy and an artistic taste.

WE ought not wait until we feel right before attempting to do right. We ought to say kind words and do kindly acts deliberately, even when we should not say and do them instinctively and impulsively.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO STEW CODFISH.—Put three pounds of fresh codfish, cut into pieces an inch thick, into boiling water, with a teaspoonful of salt, and let them boil for five minutes. Lift them out, and let them drain. Have heated, in a saucepan, one pint of cream or rich milk, with four tablespoonfuls of fine breadcrumb. Put the fish in it, and let it stew for ten minutes. Season with cayenne, and a spoonful of white wine.

CELERY SAUCE.—Wash two heads of fine white celery, and cut it into small pieces; put it into a pint and a quarter of new milk, and simmer till quite tender—about an hour—then rub it through a fine sieve. Beat the yolks of four fresh eggs with a gill of thick cream, mix all together, and stir over a gentle fire for five or six minutes, till the sauce thickens, and serve.

STEWED POTATOES.—Rub a saucepan with a clove of garlic, put two ounces of butter into it, and, when it is melted, add six large new potatoes peeled and cut in quarters. Put in a little hot water, pepper and salt to taste, a small quantity of grated nutmeg, some minced parsley, and the juice of half a lemon. Let the whole stew slowly, till the potatoes are quite done.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THERE are three little wicks to the lamp of a man's life—brain, blood and breath. Press the brain a little, its light goes out, followed by both the others. Stop the heart a minute and out goes all three of the wicks. Choke the air out of the lungs and presently the fluid ceases to supply all the other centres of flame and all is soon stagnation, cold and darkness.

Few brides have ever gone to the altar decked with so much jewellery as the Hon. Augusta Brodrick, who was married on January 2 to Mr. Cuthbert Peck, at St. Nicholas, Peper-Harow. Her veil was fastened by two diamond ornaments, round her neck was a diamond necklace, on her breast a diamond cross, on one wrist a gold and diamond bracelet, and another of splendid pearls, and on the other two pearl and diamond bangles.

SIMPLE TASTES.—Many people lapped in luxury, according to a modern author, still preserve their simple tastes. There was a great duchess who said to a neighbour, "When there is only my lord and I, we have always a dish of roast." The story is well known of George IV. sending away a splendid dinner and dining off beans and bacon. The Duke of Wellington could dine very heartily on a mutton-chop, and, in fact, did not appreciate anything beyond it. There is a great nobleman who is careful to have a magnificent dinner every day, but he frequently dines off an apple, and, from his theory of health, wishes his own family to partake as slightly as possible of the good things outspread on the bounteous board. I was talking one day with a worthy Carthusian monk who dined habitually on an apple and biscuit. He explained to me that what people called hunger about seven o'clock was only a little acidity left by the noonday meal. Many experienced stagers, who study dietetic science, out of a big menu pick up a very little dinner, and complain, in fact, that they make a very poor dinner because there are only a few perfectly natural items. Of course a man ought to know how both to abound and to be in want; but I confess to a prejudice in favour of heartily enjoying a good dinner.

SUCCESSFUL DECORATORS.—With their quick insight, naturally refined taste, and their fondness for the home, says a writer, women should take an especial interest in decoration, and successful decorators might be found, or certainly trained, among them. One of the first in merit of domestic decorators was a woman, and a talented one—Angelica Kauffman—and I have remarked that, in almost all cases where women artists have given attention to decorative matters, they have exhibited a pure, and generally an elevated taste, and have seldom produced anything inartistic or unsatisfying. Already in the studios of decorative artists women are to be found deftly embroidering, or making lace, or putting together upholsteries and parterres. There is this, however, that I wish to say, and trust the honesty and sincerity of the remark will excuse its seeming ungallantry—beware of prettiness in your work. I mean that mere prettiness carved, painted, or woven for itself, and not as the attribute of something that is above the weakly or insignificantly attractive. Merely pretty things that please for the moment, but exert no lasting influence, or that exert a harmful or weakening influence, are to be condemned in decoration as in other things. Daisies and daffodils are pleasing, but a surfeit of them is dreadfully cloying. It is a mistake to use floral accessories as if they were the principal features of a piece of decorative work; for largeness of design, and harmony of colour should be considered before those engaging leaves, and petals, and buds are painted. Decorators, like scenic artists in theatres, should begin by making a "scheme," and all matters of detail are easily made subordinate to that.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. M. S.—Yes, if the banners are properly put up.

VIVIAN VASHTIE.—The lock sent is golden auburn, a pretty shade.

"SARAH ANN."—Write to the matron, Nightingale Ward, St. Thomas's Hospital, London, S. E.

CONSTANT READER.—A daughter is under her parents' control till she is twenty-one.

D. J.—Having never seen the young lady we cannot state the colour of her hair.

W. R. P.—1. The date of the book [you refer to] is 1892. 2. Under the circumstances you state you will have to send the money in a registered letter.

D. S. O.—An appropriate answer would be, "You are quite excusable;" or, "We accept your apology in the same spirit with which you tender it."

K. M. J.—The Irish giant Murphy, contemporary with O'Brien or Charles Byrne, was eight feet ten inches in height. He died at Marseilles.

C. D. F.—1. No. 2. Flirting is a dangerous pleasure. No young lady who has any respect for herself will flirt with a stranger.

JOHN F.—The wife can certainly compel her husband to support her, and under the circumstances he would be a scoundrel to attempt to evade it.

L. R.—The eyelashes having once fallen out, you will have to depend on nature to restore them, as there is no reliable compound that will produce such a result.

S. N. T.—Prince Louis Napoleon, only son of Napoleon III., was killed by the Zulus in South Africa on June 20th, 1879. His age was twenty-three.

INTENDING PURCHASER.—It depends entirely whether the widow had full power to assign the policy and the money thereby assured. If so you would be safe in purchasing.

K. C.—1. Cannel coal is a bituminous coal, receiving its name from turning with a bright flame like a candle, which latter word has been corrupted into "cannel." 2. No extra charge is made for back numbers.

C. M.—Un-ess you can give more than two lines of the poem, we cannot answer you as to its authorship. Perhaps it is one of the numerous newspaper poems, and as a consequence not classed in any book of quotations.

A. O. S.—A betrothal admits the parties into somewhat of the sympathies and affectionate consideration that endear the relations of married life. Consequently, you need not hesitate to let your accepted lover kiss you at meeting and parting.

M. C. K.—To remove pimples the following recipe is recommended:—Pure lard, one ounce; citron ointment, one ounce; finest almond oil, half an ounce; mix well together, and scout, if you wish it, with a few drops of oil of bergamot.

D. M. V.—The Rev. Theobald Mathew, commonly known as Father Mathew, was born at Thomas-town, in Tipperary County, Ireland, October 10, 1790. He was principally noted for his labours in the temperance cause, being known by the familiar title of the "Apostle of Temperance." He died in 1856.

ONLY SIXTEEN.—1. If you allow the glycerine to stay on all night it will improve the skin. 2. Use prepared chalk for your teeth. 3. We have not the receipt for cocoanut candy; perhaps some of our readers will oblige. 3. In answer to the question written on the envelope of the latter it depends on circumstances, but the practice should be stopped at once.

N. M. G.—The "Belle Sauvage" was the name of a noted old London tavern which formerly stood on Ludgate-hill. Thackeray thus alludes to it:—"A few of these quaint old figures still remain in London town. You may still see there, and over its old hostel in Ludgate-hill the 'Belle Sauvage' to whom the Spectator so pleasantly alludes, and who was probably no other than the sweet Ameri-an Pocahontas who rescued from death the daring Captain Smith."

FLORENCE.—The young lady appears to be of a careless, indolent disposition, and should fight against it with all her might and main, or it will grow upon her to such an extent that it will eventually lead to unhappiness. She cannot have a very deep affection for her sweetheart. 2. Not if he was worthy of her. 3. It does not follow that because a girl does not like a young man that she is therefore idle or worthless, as she may be industrious enough in other ways, but a good knowledge of plain needlework is an exceedingly valuable acquisition. 4. Handwriting slovenly. 5. Not if it was black.

E. L. W.—Astrakhan, the capital of the government of that name, is situated on an island formed by one of the branches of the Volga, about twenty miles from the sea. It is an entrepot of the Russian Oriental trade, and the raw produce from remote regions, consisting principally of hides, sheepskins, and grease, is brought there. The government of Astrakhan was annexed to Russia by the Czar Ivan the Terrible in 1554. The population of the city of Astrakhan is com-

posed of all nations of Europe and Asia, and of nearly all creeds. There are mosques for the Mohammedans and sanctuaries for the Hindoos, as well as Christian churches. About one hundred small manufacturing establishments produce cashmere shawls, silk and cotton fabrics, furs, dyce, powder, and salt.

LISIE.—There is no known substance that will, if mixed with the paint put on the walls of a house, banish or destroy flies. The yolk of an egg, beaten up with a teaspoonful each of treacle and finely-ground pepper, and set about in shallow plates, will rapidly kill these pests.

I. V. D.—Your physical condition may be advanced and improved by strict attention to the laws of health. An abundance of out-of-door sports, such as walking, rowing, horseback-riding, skating, etc., with a diet of wholesome food, and plenty of sleep at early hours, will strengthen you to a wonderful extent.

L. M. J.—According to good authority, the largest bell in the world is hung in the tower of a temple in the city of Kioto, Japan. It is 21 ft. high and 16 in. thick at the edge. This bell has no clapper, but is rung by means of a great beam of wood, which strikes it on the outside. The great bell of Moscow is 19 ft. 3 in. high, and weighs 145,000 lbs.

## "A PHOTO."

In the wreck of an old worn album  
That a child unearthed I set play,  
I found this little picture—  
A leaf from a long-closed day.  
That face of boyish beauty  
Must now be lined with care;  
And the locks of raven blackness  
Must gleam with a silver hair.

Somewhere he lives and labours,  
And takes his part in the strife  
That is not at all the poem  
We dreamed in early life.  
The ways we planned together  
We must tread apart through time;  
For the years stepped in between us,  
And they spoke in prose—not rhyme.

And so I hid his picture  
Away from my own sight,  
And bravely look for sunshine  
Through clouds as black as night.  
It has glimmered often up in me,  
But never as of old  
Has dropped in a royal shower  
Of pure and melting gold;  
And I know, through all the darkness,  
It is all for the best, somehow;  
Yet I wish that little photo  
Had not been found to-day.

E. W.

P. M. B.—Alder charcoal is highly esteemed for the manufacture of gunpowder on account of its excellent quality. The bark of the alder tree is used for tanning, and, with the addition of coppers and other ingredients, forms a dye for several colours. The wood of the tree is in request for cabinet-making, turnery, and mill wheels.

G. D. M.—Glass paste is a fine kind of glass of different colours, used for making false precious stones. The glass chiefly used is called *strass*, German *strass*, named after the man who first found it out. This can be coloured with oxides of metal so perfectly that the false stones can scarcely be told from the real ones.

FREDA.—Ruth signifies sorrow for the misery of another; pity; tenderness. Webster says the word is obsolete, except in poetry. It is used by Tennyson as follows:—

"Ruth began to work  
Against his anger in him."

PRETTY FREED.—1. Pluck up courage and do not fret about him; show a little more spirit, and if he really cares for you he will think all the more of you. If you are honest and true and love him, you have only to act simply and naturally as your own heart dictates, and if he is worth a second thought he will come back to you. Crying and making yourself miserable will never help you. 2. We never answer letters through the post.

D. B. L.—Croton oil is expressed from the seeds of a plant which grows in Ceylon, Malacca, Hindostan, and other parts of Asia. As is well known, it is a speedy and powerful purgative. In the dose of one or two drops. In larger quantities it produces vomiting and great pain, and is sometimes fatal in its effects. It was known in Europe as early as 1630, but attracted little notice. Externally applied, it produces inflammation of the skin and a pustular eruption sufficiently resembling that of small-pox to deceive any inexperienced observer. It is sometimes used as a counter-irritant. It has a slight odour, and a bitter, burning taste.

M. B.—The earliest undoubted mention of playing cards is in the household accounts of Charles VI. of France, in the year 1392 or 1393, but many writers think that games resembling our games of cards were played in the East from time immemorial. Each is a modern game of American origin, said by some to have originated among the French in Louisiana, and by others among the Pennsylvanians of German descent; it is so like *Ecarté* that it seems probable that it has been derived from that game. The King, Queen, and Knave or Jack, are simply the King, Queen and their

valet or attendant, and hence there is a little popular humour in giving the Knave or Jack the power of capturing his master and mistress under certain conditions. There is some confusion about the marks which distinguish the suits. The earliest German packs had hearts, bells, leaves, and acorns. Italian and Spanish cards still have swords, clubs, cups, and money. The French borrowed hearts, leaves, and acorns from the Germans, substituted diamonds for bells, altered gradually the acorn to its present form as in the Italian packs, and finally the English took the French signs, but called the sword a spade.

ETNA.—In order to ensure the domestic happiness of a pair who should marry when the wife was forty-seven and the husband only forty, the love of the husband would have to be of the truest and sincerest kind. Marriages where there was such a disparity in the ages of the parties have sometimes turned out very happily.

P. S.—It may be that your lover's sensitiveness as to his poverty leads him to be a little unreasonable in the matter of which you complain. But if he is so, his error is one that you can afford to overlook. Such a bright and intelligent young lady as you seem to be can doubtless hit upon some mode of dressing elegantly that would not seem to your lover like extravagant splendour.

W. R. N.—You were polite enough to the young man who accompanied you home. Your invitation to him to call on you was a sufficient recognition of his services. The rings mostly worn by ladies are plain diamond ones. A ring with one fine diamond, which is called a *solitaire* ring, is usually most valued. The varieties of precious stones are too numerous to mention them all in an answer to this column.

DELTA.—A very fine handkerchief perfume is made as follows:—Grate to fine powder half a nutmeg, and crush one quarter of an ounce of cloves; put these together in half a pint of best spirits of wine. After three or four days' maceration, add two drams of oil of lavender, two drams of oil of bergamot, one dram of oil of lemon, and half a dram of tincture of roses; strain through a piece of blotting paper, folded to fit the funnel, and the mixture will be ready for use.

R. S. M.—The reason why the North pole attracts so much more attention than the South pole are that all the great civilizations have their seats in the northern hemisphere, and that, as far as we know, the South pole is surrounded, in most directions, for a great distance by ocean. It would be hard to show that any immediate material advantage would result from the discovery of the North pole and the exploration of the extreme North, any more than the discovery of a new planet, but a legitimate desire for knowledge would be gratified, and the facts observed would be of value in meteorology, in geology, and in the various sciences, which touch on the changes in animal and vegetable life under unusual conditions.

S. W. C.—The silvering of looking-glasses is usually done by coating the glass with an amalgam. For this purpose a large, perfectly flat stone table is provided; upon it is evenly spread a sheet of tin foil without crease or flaw; this is covered uniformly to the depth of an eighth of an inch with clean mercury. The plate of glass, perfectly cleansed from all grease and impurity, is floated on to the mercury carefully, so as to exclude all air bubbles. It is then pressed down by loading it with weights in order to press out all the mercury which remains fluid, which is received in a gutter around the stone. After about twenty-four hours it is raised gently upon its edge, and in a few weeks it is ready to frame. To convex and concave mirrors the amalgamated foil is applied by means of accurately fitting plaster moulds. The interior of globes is silvered by introducing a liquid amalgam, and turning about the globe until every part is covered with it.

F. G. W.—The Aztecs were one of the seven tribes or nations that at the time of the Spanish conquest of Mexico inhabited that country. Those tribes were united under one government, and collectively bore the name of *Nahuatlacas*. According to their own traditions they came from a distant land called *Aztlan*. Where *Aztlan* was situated nobody has ever been able to determine with certainty. Some authorities locate it in the far north, and others in the region south of Mexico. The date of the migration from *Aztlan* to Mexico is supposed to have been in the latter part of the eleventh or the first part of the twelfth century. This being so, the Aztecs and their companions could not have built the ancient mounds that are found in various parts of the United States, as these structures are believed to antedate the eleventh century, by some hundreds of years.

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